

THE
Heavenly Register:

BEING AN
ATTEMPT

To unfold something of the
NATURE and DESIGN
OF THAT

Book of Remembrance

Which the Lord keeps, both of the Names
and Discourse of Christians, while conver-
sant here upon Earth, from *Mal. iii. 16.*

To which are added,
Serious Reflections on divers SUBJECTS;

DESIGNED
As a Specimen for the religious Improvement
of the more common Occurrences of Life.

By WILLIAM NOTCUTT. *K*

The Third Edition.

*Zeph. iii. 9. Then will I turn to the People, a pure Language,
that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve
him with one Consent.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN CLARK, and RICHARD HETT,
at the *Bible and Crown* in the *Poultry*. 1728.

(Price Bound 1 s. 6 d. with Allowance to those who buy
a Number.)





TO THE
FLOCK of GOD
IN
IPSWICH,

Over which, I trust, the Holy Ghost hath made me Overseer; tho' I count my self less than the least of all the faithful Servants of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Ministry.

My dearly beloved and longed for, my Joy and Crown.

YOU know, that not long since, at our more private Meetings of the Church, I twice spoke something from Malachi iii. 16. signifying the prevailing Piety among the People of GOD, in a Day, or Time, of great Declension. It was from the afflicting Thoughts I often had of our own Times,

and the great Want we have of more Life and Love among us, that made me pitch upon that Subject.

Though it is but a poor Mite, that I can cast into the Treasury of the Lord, yet every one should do something: And I hoped, that the Interest I had in the Affections of many Christians, might teach them to overlook some Weaknesses of this Performance; and encline them to lend an Hand to promote the common Good.

I have often heartily wished, that something of this Nature might be written, more than I have ever yet seen, to attempt to restore decay'd Piety among us, too much shewing it self in the common, frothy, light, vain, empty, and unprofitable Discourse of some Professors, when they meet together, and visit each other. Discourses, which if writ down, and read afterwards, even by themselves, might justly occasion Shame and Grief to their Souls, to think, how empty, and to what little Purpose they had spoken; how little of GOD and Religion, how little Salt of Grace was mixt with what they spoke.

It is allowable that Christians should talk sometimes, but not always, of News, of Trade, of Fields,

Fields, Houses, Horses, and other Affairs; but not all of this World, but something of that which is to come. Not all of the Body, but something of the Soul too; not all of Foreign Affairs, sometimes we should come nearer Home; not always of other Men's Matters, but sometimes of our own Concerns; not all merry Jest, and Puns, and diverting Stories. O what Rubbish fills the Hearts of some Professors! If we may judge of the Fountain by the Streams, who may not lay his Hand upon his Breast, and sigh, to the breaking of his Heart, for that the Glory is so much departed from the House of GOD. One Denomination of Christians has little need to upbraid another, but each to say, with Grief, What have I done? And now, What can I do to restore decay'd Piety? Every true Christian should be asking, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

If you would do any Thing to Purpose, you must cast out these Enemies of GOD, and Religion, and of your own Souls too, the vain Thoughts that lodge within you, that take up their Rest and Habitation in your Hearts from Morning to Evening, else how can you expect to be free from these in the Hour of religious Duties. Do some of

you bewail your wandering Thoughts at such a Time? Truly it is no Wonder that these Fowls come down upon your Sacrifices, when they are allow'd to swarm about the Heart at other Times. If you would drive them away at the Hour of Prayer, then take Care of them, keep a strict Watch over them at other Seasons.

Some Christians have enquired, Why were the former Times better than these? They tell us what they enjoyed in Days past, how much Love, how much Comfort, how much Savour of the Word, how much they hungred and thirsted after it; and that they found it, and eat it; and that it was the Joy and Rejoycing of their Heart. You hear them wish, Wou'd to GOD, the Man of GOD would come again. And, O that it were with me, as in Days past.

But what is the Ground and Occasion of this Disease and Complaint? Where must we lay the Blame? May we dare to charge it upon GOD? Has he been a barren Wilderness to us, or a Land of Drought? Have we not our Sabbaths? Have we not open Vision? Have we not the Sunshine of the Gospel upon us, the Word preached, in Season and out of Season; and Gospel Ordinances
admi-

administred to us, plainly, purely, frequently; Whence then is our Leanness, while we are in fat Pastures? Or, are Ministers altogether to be blamed, that you have so little of the Life and Power of Religion? Sirs, Ministers bewail the little Success they have in their Work, and would be glad to see more Life, and more Love among their Hearers, and in their Churches.

Let none deceive themselves, in thinking, that their present Coldness and Heartlesness in Religion, is to be laid at the Minister's Door. O, say some, What warm Sermons have we heard formerly! But to such, we may reply, Was the Minister all at that Time? Were they his warm Affections, that warm'd yours so much as you talk of? Or did you pray more then, than you do now? Do you come now with the same Hunger and Thirst to the Word, that you did then? Did you not talk more of the Things of GOD by the Way, even till your Hearts burned within you? Where then is the Blessedness you speak of? What is become of this Life? Where have you left your first Love? Where have you left your Glory? Who, or what hath stopped your Mouths from religious Discourses? Where did your De-
clensions

clenſions begin? What may be the Occaſion of your Coldneſs and Indifferency in Religion? How was it, that the Word of GOD was more precious in Days paſt, than now? Was it becauſe you heard it but now and then, or becauſe you went through ſome Difficulty to hear it? O what Pity is it, that, like Children, any ſhould grow wanton, and play with their greater Plenty of Food; or that any ſhould grow cold by the Fire. Where is the old Love that Chriſtians uſed to expreſs towards each other, without the miſchievous Diſtinctions and Diviſions which are now among us; whereby Brotherly Love and Piety are much hindered? Brethren, I believe this is a Worm at the Root of our holy Religion, which is never like to thrive, till all true Chriſtians unite to carry on the common Intereſt of our Lord Jeſus, without the little, ſelfiſh Party-Making. Haſt thou Faith [a private Opinion] have it to thy ſelf; [keep it to thy ſelf] make a Difference between Subſtantials and Circumſtantials; between Things eſſential to Salvation, and Things doubtful to ſome true Chriſtians.

When I gave you ſome Thoughts on this Text, I never intended to have made it more publick, than to the few that then heard it: But I con-

sider'd with my self, this is not our Disease only; but, we may suppose, that others need to hear and learn, as well as the few that heard these Discourses. While I was debating in my Mind about it, I thought with my self, What if I cannot do as I desire, or as some other Minister of greater Abilities might have done, yet can I do nothing? And ought I not to do something according to the Talent I have received? If I am made a Watchman, then I ought to give Warning. And as for my appearing in print, though I am one of the least of the Stars in Christ's Right Hand, yet I am to endeavour to do the Office of such an one to the Church of Christ.

1. To add to the Number of Witnesses, against the Sin of the Day, and the Declension of Professors, both in Word and in Actions.

2. Because one of meaner Abilities may suit himself more to the Capacities of some Persons, than Men of greater Learning and better Parts may be able to do; or at least may care to do.

3. Because in the Sphere, where this little Star moves, many having great Value for him, and a constant Eye to him, may more readily attend to what he may speak, both of Doctrines to be believed,

lieved, and of Duties to be done, in order to Salvation; and also, for present mutual Comfort and Edification.

4. His little Book may fall into the Hands of some Persons, where greater Volumes may never come; for there are abundance of Families that never had a Book larger than their common Bible in their House. To the Poor the Gospel is preached, and they must have their Food; and they will be glad of it, tho' it is but mean, if it be clean and wholesome.

5. Tho' some in the Ministry cannot do so much, or so well as some others can, yet their Hearts, as well as greater Men's, are in the Work of GOD; therefore cannot but desire, that living and dying, they may employ their Head, and Hand, and Tongue, and Pen, in the Service of GOD; that when dead, they may yet speak, even when they have no longer a Tongue to use in the Service of Christ, and for the Good of Souls. Those that had not Gold to bring towards the building of the Tabernacle and the Temple, were appointed to bring meaner Things. But then they were to offer it willingly, and I hope so I do, and heartily wish Success to the Building. I am perswaded, that
though

though this is but a weak Attempt, it is designed to the Glory of G O D, and to approve my self faithful to my Lord, in my great Trust. And if my Service be accepted of the Saints, and may prove advantageous to promote more visible Piety among us, I shall think my Time to have been well employed in what I have here done.

And now, Brethren, I trust that I shall not shew my self like the Pharisees, binding a Burden on others, that they would not touch with one of their Fingers; but, by the Help of G O D, shall labour to practise what I believe to be my Duty, as well as yours. For a Minister ought not to be like a Post, set up in the Highway, that makes dumb Signs to the Traveller, which Way he should take, but never moves it self towards the Place, whither it directs another to go: A Minister should be able to say, That which ye have seen in me do. Be ye Followers of me. A Minister should be an Example to the Flock, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity. Let us remember, that G O D expects better Language, better Carriage, better Fruit from us, than from many others: Our Wine, if it be musty, will be worse than others good Water; I mean, worse than the harmless

less Speech of natural Persons, as the vain Conversation of Professors will be more unsavory and hurtful. What Heads of Things I have added, after I had finished the Text, were designed to further the same good End; that is, to propose suitable Matter for your profitable Thoughts; and also to shew you, by those Examples, how you may improve innumerable Occurrences to your own and others Advantage. I hope you will follow this poor Attempt, with your earnest Prayers to GOD, that it may be blessed to the Profit of many, that you and I may rejoyce together, in the Day of the Lord Jesus, that we have not run in vain, and laboured in vain; which, I trust, shall always be the hearty Prayer of your Servant for Jesus Sake.

W. N.



A Book of REMEMBRANCE, &c.



M A L. iii. 16.

Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name.



THE most high GOD, Creator, Guide and Governor of the World, knows all the Creatures, and he that searcheth the Reins and the Hearts of all Men, knows how every Soul is byassed; whether they are inclined to *Evil*, or bent to seek God, and serve him. Here, the Omniscient God takes Notice of a very great Difference between Men in the same Age, in the same Place, Men of the same common Profession, Descendants
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from the same Parents ; some of these feared God, and some feared him not : That was an Age wherein *Iniquity abounded, and the Love of many waxed cold* towards God, and their holy Religion, and one towards another ; yet there were some among them that feared the Lord, and loved one another, and whose Hearts were set upon promoting true Piety, and the Life and Power of Religion in their own Hearts, and the Souls of others.

There were Tares and Wheat in the same Field ; Chaff and Wheat in the same Floor ; good Fish and bad in the same Net. Some that had not God in all their Thoughts, and others that thought upon his Name. Some whose Time was taken up in idle, vain, loose and unprofitable Discourse ; and others whose Speech was seasoned with Grace ; pleasing to God, and such as was recorded in Heaven. What a Mercy is it to be kept with God in a Time of common Declension, and to be preserved upright before God, like *Noah*, in an evil Generation ; When *the Imaginations of Men's Hearts are only evil, and that continually*. Not to be vain with vain Companions, or those we trade with, and live among. And with *Caleb* and *Joshua*, to have another Spirit, differing from the Generality of those they live among.

It is needful that I should take Notice of a few Things in the Context, before I come to speak directly to the Words of the Text ; because of the Reference thereto, by the Word *then*, at the Beginning of our Text : For so we shall the better understand the Reason why that Word is placed there. *Then* those that feared the Lord, &c. In those very evil Times ; then it was a Time of great Temptations ; and then their Piety shone

the brighter. Now let us take a View of those Times, with the evil Persons that made the Times evil.

1. We have the Charge of the Judge of all the Earth against them ; and it was drawn up by him who must needs do right to his Creatures. The Charge is this, *ver. 13. Your Words have been stout against me, saith the Lord.* You have behaved your selves with a proud Heart; quarrelling against my Word, and my Providences. Something like what is said of Men of like Spirit and Temper, *Job xxi. 13, 14, 15. They spend their Days in Wealth [or Mirth] and in a Moment they go down to the Grave ; Therefore they say to GOD, depart from us, we desire not the Knowledge of his Ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? And what Profit should we have if we pray unto him ?*

2. We have the Answer of these Men to their Charge ; which God that cannot lie had laid in against them ; [and the Answer is insolent enough] *What have we spoken so much against thee ? ver. 13.* Observe it, they don't confess their Sin, and ask Pardon, and promise Amendment, as God might reasonably have expected. As he speaks at another Time, *Jer. iii. 13. Only acknowledge thine Iniquity ;* and then how readily is his pardoning Grace extended to the Penitent. But these justify themselves, and excuse their Sins, and attempt to lessen their Crimes ; as God is witness, and gives a true Report of their own Words : *Yet ye say, what have we spoken so much against thee ?* Observe the Subtilty of Satan, and the Deceitfulness of their Hearts, in covering of their Sin ; for they do not pretend directly to deny it, but they endeavour to make it look as small a Mat-

ter as possible. *What have we spoken so much?* We said it indeed, but was that such a great Matter? We did it, but it was but a little one; others have spoken and done as bad or worse than we. O how deceitful is the Heart of Man by the Fall! If some Men see their Sins, and that they are not so good as they should be, then they imagine, that they are not quite so bad as the Word of God represents them to be: Or if they cannot altogether justify themselves, then they please themselves with the Thought, that they are not quite so bad as some others.

GOD, I thank thee, that I am not [so great a Sinner] as some other Men. After this Manner these Offenders here speak. We are Sinners, indeed, but, *what have we done so much?*

Again, it may be observed, that they don't ask, *what have I done?* with a Desire to see their Sins, and be humbled for them, and to amend their Lives; but that they might give God the Lie, and justify themselves, and put God upon the Proof of his Charge against them. And so the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, condescends to do. As he has spoken to Men of the same Stamp, *Psal. l. 21. Thou thoughtest me such an one as thy self, but I will reprove thee, and set thy Sins in order before thee.*

3. God proves his Charge against them, *ver. 14, 15.* and he does it in their own Words; That he might say to them, *out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked Servant.*

In this Proof of the Charge against this sinful People, observe,

(1.) That wicked Men would fain have others to think that they serve the Lord. We serve the Lord, say they, but where is the Profit of it? What

a Cheat did they put upon themselves! Serve the Lord! What! with a wicked, stout, proud Heart; and with filthy Hands? What! serve God, and yet love Sin! do they think they can serve two contrary Masters? God and Sin, Christ and their Lusts?

(2.) What mean Thoughts carnal Persons take up of the Service of God? And they shew it in many Expressions. It is in vain, they say, to serve God. To which we might answer, why do not these very Men argue thus with regard to Sin? and so leave it off, upon the same Account, that is, because there is no Profit in it? *What Fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. vi. 21.

Carnal Persons are utter Strangers to the spiritual Pleasure and Profit of the Service of God. *Prov. iii. 17. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. GOD is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* Heb. xi. 6. *In keeping of his Commandments there is a great Reward,* Psal. xix. 11. *Godliness is great Gain, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and that [Life] which is to come,* 1 Tim. iv. 8. — Now, Come hither, you that say it is vain to serve God, let us reason together, let me ask you a few Questions.

[1.] Did you ever try it? Whether it is vain to serve God, or not; because others have said, *It is good for me that I draw nigh to God,* Psal. lxxiii. 28. Is it so for one and not for another? Then let me ask you again,

[2.] Where were your Hearts; when you thought you served God? Did thy Heart engage in the Service of God? Or did thy Heart go after other Things?

[3.] What did you do with your Sins, while you worshiped or served God? Was not there some beloved Sin in the Heart? *Psal. lxvi. 18. If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear me.* Was not this the very Reason why you had no Profit by the Service you offered to God? *Your Iniquities have separated between you and your GOD, and your Sins have hid his Face from you, that he will not hear,* *Isaiah lix. 2. GOD heareth not [impenitent] Sinners; but if any Man be a Worshiper of GOD, and doth his Will, him he heareth,* *John ix. 31.* It is not enough to be a Worshiper, unless we also do the Will of God.

[4.] Did you worship and serve God in the Name of *Jesus Christ*, and with Dependance on his Merits? If we leave out Christ and his Righteousness, our Services are all light and empty: and the best of our Sacrifices are of no Value; for the Incense that should perfume them is wanting.

[5.] Did you serve God with Reverence and godly Fear? Or did you trifle in his Presence? *GOD is great and greatly to be feared, and to be had in Reverence of all that draw nigh to him,* *Psal. lxxxix. 7.* He is a jealous God, and knows the Heart, whether it is sincere or not, and whether there is any Love to God, or to his Service.

(3.) These Accusers of God and his Service, bring a Proof, as they suppose, of what they had before asserted. Their Assertion was; *It is vain to serve GOD.* And they attempt to prove it thus; we have kept his Ordinances, and we had no Profit by it. *What Profit is it if we keep his Ordinances?*

How

How may we suppose these Men kept the Ordinances of God? Doubtless as other graceless Persons use to do; That is, only with a bodily Attendance; where they heard the Word of God preached; but would not do it. They heard of the Danger of Sin; and yet held it fast, in Heart and Practice. They hear of the Duty of Prayer, and live in the Neglect of it. They hear of the Necessity of a Saviour, and have no liking to him.

But is the Service of God really unprofitable? No, it is a false Accusation. *Doth Job serve God for nought?* Saith the Enemy of God and Goodness; *Job* may well serve God heartily, fervently, and with great Delight; for he is well paid for all his Service. But you have this Witness from one that knew the Matter well: *Psal. xix. 11. In keeping of his Commandments there is a great Reward.* Wages of Grace, not of Debt, that downweigh all the Service they have done. Whence is it then that carnal Persons suppose that there is no Profit in keeping the Commandments of God? Because they know nothing what it is to keep them; being ignorant of Faith in Christ, and Repentance towards God; which are Obedience to the first and chief Commands of God, in the Gospel. Besides, we may suspect, that such Persons only aim at worldly Profit by the Service of God. These are low and base Ends in serving God; to aim at this World instead of Heaven, and Gold instead of Grace. It will be the Mercy of all such Worshipers, if they miss of their End, and are directed to a better.

But these Men bring a second Argument, such as it is, to prove, *that it is in vain to serve GOD.* And it is this; *we have walked mournfully before*
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the Lord of Hosts. We have appeared before him in black ; we have put on Sackcloth, something like that Accusation, *Isa. lviii. 3. We have fasted, say they, and thou takest no Notice of it.* But God shew'd the Hypocrisy of it.

So these Men, *We have walked mournfully.* So did *Ahab*, with an outside Shew ; he put on Sackcloth, but did not put off his Sins. And did you walk mournfully ? That's well, but what did you mourn over ? Did you mourn over your Sins, and did you put away your Iniquities, when you confessed them ? If not, you did but play the Hypocrite, and so increase your Sin. You fasted, and abstained from Food, but did you abstain from Sin ? Your Garments were changed, but were your Hearts, and your Life changed ?

If there is no Profit in Religion, to thy Soul, it must lie at thy own Door. There is some Worm or other at the Root, some accursed Thing hid in thy Tent ; some beloved Sin, in thy Heart ; that is the Hindrance to thy Profit. Bring it out and confess it, and give Glory to God, in forsaking, as well as in confessing of it, and thou shalt not die but live. *Prov. xxviii. 13. He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper ; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find Mercy.*

(4.) We have the mistaken Judgment, or hasty, and mischievous Conclusion of these carnal Persons. They judge of the Favour of God, and of the Truth of Religion, by visible Providence. As if the Way, whereby God usually distinguished his People from others, was by the Things of this Life. There is a Way indeed, whereby God does manifest himself to his own, as he does not to the World, *John xiv. 22.* but that is, not by Riches, Honours, outward Peace, bodily Health,
or

or by any other desirable Enjoyments of this^s World ; but by the Distributions of his special^l Grace.

But let us now see, how they shew their fatal Mistake, which has much Evil in it.

1. Say they, *We call the Proud happy.* The Proud, that is, the Rich ; because they are too often so ; though it were well if some of the Poor were not so too. We call the Proud happy, but what does God call them ? For the Thoughts of God, and the Thoughts of Men, are often very differing.

(1.) They are so in the Matter of Pardon of Sin. *Isa. lv. 7, 8, 9. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him ; and to our GOD, for he will abundantly pardon : For my Thoughts are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways, saith the Lord ; For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts.*

(2.) So it is, as to the Providences of God in the World ; which is the very Thing that they now cavil at. *Eccles. ix. 1. Love or Hatred is not known by all that is before a Man.* That is, by much or little of this World's Good.

2. They add, as another false Accusation of divine Providence, *Those that work Wickedness are set up :* That work Wickedness. Whence we may observe, that wicked Men make a Trade of Sin : They work at it. Wicked Men take much Pains in the Ways of Sin. They plow Iniquity ; and they must expect to reap the same. These, say they, are set up. Wicked Men may be in High-places.

places. The vilest Men are sometimes exalted, *Psal. xii. 8.* And what if they are? There they are set by divine Providence; for the Kingdoms of the World are the Lord's, and he gives them to whom he will. And who shall say to a King, and much less to infinite Wisdom, *what dost thou?* Are they set up? They are in slippery Places: Wouldst thou be there too? Or else, why art thou offended at the Providence of God? Rather study to serve and honour God, in the Place where he has set thee, and think that Condition best, that God has chosen for thee.

3. They add, *They that tempt GOD are even delivered.* That's another vile Accusation of divine Providence.

Observe,

Those that *work Wickedness tempt GOD.*

(1.) Whether God can see what they do; for there is such Atheism in the Hearts of Men. *Psal. lxxiii. 11. They say, how doth GOD know? and is there Knowledge in the most High? Psal. xciv. 7. They say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the GOD of Jacob regard it.* What does God answer such? *Ye Fools! When will ye be wise? He that planted the Ear, shall not be hear? He that formed the Eye, shall not be see? The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that they are Vanity.*

(2.) They tempt God, as they try whether God will punish them for their Sins. What will Sinners get by this desperate Attempt? Have they not read, have they not seen, that God is a jealous God? And though he is long-suffering, and does not execute Vengeance speedily; yet when his Patience is abused, and Men venture to sin, because his Grace abounds, they shall know that God is a
holy

holy God, and hates all Sin, and will surely punish impenitent Sinners. That which they here insinuate is, that God commonly shews more Favour to the Wicked than to good Men. There is nothing more false and unjust than this Accusation. *The Lord loveth the Righteous*: These have his Presence, his gracious Protection. These are dear to him. These are design'd to be set up indeed, for God will bring them all to Glory.

Thus I have given you some Account of the very bad Times, in which these good Men lived, who are said, in our Text, to *fear the Lord, and who thought upon his Name.*

In which Words we may observe these Parts.

- I. The Power of divine Grace, in carrying out some to the Practice of Godliness, even in evil Times, and evil Places.
- II. The Character of these good Men: They *feared the Lord*. It is a Covenant *Fear of GOD*, in the Heart, that keeps any from departing from GOD, Jer. xxxii. 40.
- III. We have an Account of their Practice.
 1. They *thought upon the Name of GOD*.
 2. *They spake one to another.*
- IV. We are told how God treated them.
 1. He approved of them, and of what they did. *The Lord hearkened and heard it.*

2. GOD kept an exact Account of what they spake one to another. *A Book of Remembrance was written before him.* To which we might justly add ;
3. That GOD promised to spare them. *I will spare them, saith GOD, as a Father spareth his own Son that serveth him.*
4. GOD lays Claim to them, as his special Treasure. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the Day that I make up my Jewels, i. e. They shall appear to be mine, my best Treasure.* From all which it appears, *That it is not vain to serve GOD.* When good Men may have forgotten the Good they have spoken and done, *GOD is not unrighteous to forget their Work, and Labour of Love. Their Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.* It shall receive the Reward of Grace, the Crown of Life.

I shall now endeavour to explain the Terms of the Text, and apply them to the Purpose designed ; and shall do it in the Order in which they lie before us ; and in which I have now proposed them to your Consideration. And, O that we may do it, as those that believe that the All-seeing Eye of GOD is over us ; and as those that remember, that *GOD hearkens, and hears, and keeps a Book of Remembrance of whatever we speak or do.*

I. I take Notice of the Power of divine Grace, where-ever it reaches the Heart, carrying out the
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Receiver to the lively Practice of Godliness, even where there are very few Companions in the holy Work of Religion.

I gather this Note from the Word *then* ; that is, at that Time of Degeneracy, which we have before describ'd.

How is the Grace of God to be admired, in carrying these true *Israelites*, like living Fish, against the Stream of Vanity and Impiety, that ran strongly in their Day. And like spiritual Mariners, their living Souls were carried against the Wind and Tide of common Corruption and Profaneness. *Then, when Iniquity abounded, and the Love of many waxed cold* ; even *then* there were some that had their Hearts and Affections warm in Religion ; it fill'd their Thoughts and Mouths, their Speech favour'd of it. Though God is not in all the Thoughts of others, these *thought upon his Name*. And if some Professors can talk loosely and vainly, these being guided by a better Spirit, and by a new Principle, even of Grace from Heaven, have their *Speech season'd with Grace*, Col. iv. 6. The corrupt Conversation of some, defiles many ; but these, with their *Speech season'd with Salt, administer Grace to the Hearers*.

This was exemplified in *Noah* ; God saw him, and knew his Heart and Practice ; and gives this Witness of him, Gen. vii. 1. *Thee have I seen righteous in this Generation*. That is, when *all Flesh had corrupted their Way, and when every Imagination of the Thoughts of their Heart were only Evil, and that continually*, Gen. vi. 5. A Day, like what was said, Jer. viii. 6. *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright ; no Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, what have I done ? Every one turned to his Course, as the Horse*
C
rusheth

rusheth into the Battle. It is owing to the Grace of GOD, that some are good in bad Times ; lively Christians, while many about them are but formal Professors. It is a singular Mercy to have the *Heart kept close with GOD*, and to the Work and Business of Religion, in wicked Places ; like *Lot in Sodom* ; and when the Godly dwell, even *where Satan's Seat is*, Rev. ii. 13.

By this we learn, that the Grace of GOD is sufficient for us also, to preserve us upright in this untoward Generation, in which we live ; and which we, as well as the People of GOD of old, are charged to *save our selves from*, Acts ii. 40. And what can we suppose is contained in that Charge ? Surely, not to conform our selves to them in Fashions and Manners, that are evil. Professors must not be like the Camelion, that changes its Colour to almost every thing that it stands upon. If Professors conform themselves to all Company, to be light and vain with vain Persons ; then where is Self-denial, and where is taking up the Cross ; and what do Christians more than others ? O Shame ! that ever Occasion should be given to any to say, how much do you less than others, and worse than others. More covetous, more proud, more passionate than many others.

But is this enough for a true Disciple of Jesus Christ, to take Care to keep himself [or herself] out of the common Infection ? No, verily ; for they ought to be *Examples of Piety, Patience, Humility, Faith, Love, and Purity. They should shine as Lights in the World.* Matt. v. 16. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they, seeing your good Works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Phil. ii. 15. *That ye may be blameless*

less and harmless, the Sons of GOD, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom ye shine [shine ye] as Lights in the World.

II. We have the laudable and exemplary Character of these good Men. They were such as *feared the Lord*. They had the promised Covenant Fear of GOD in their Hearts.

1. They were afraid of Sin, and watchful against Temptations. Afraid of being infected with the common reigning Disease of the Times and Places where they lived. The Plague of Impiety was almost every where crept into every Family; the Contagion was almost universal: It is high Time then to be afraid.

2. They had an Awe of the Majesty and Holiness of God upon their Hearts; this would not suffer them to do, and speak as others. This will always hold good, that before Men run greedily to Courses of Sin [it is supposed, that] the Fear of God is not in them. Sin is a Departing from God; and the Fear of God is a good Means to prevent this Departure from God. Therefore, when God would keep his People from turning again to Courses of Sin, he promises to *put his Fear in their Hearts, that they might not depart away from him*, Jer. xxxii. 40.

Then, how earnestly should we pray for ourselves and others; that God would put this Covenant Fear into, and keep it in all our Hearts; for our Lot is fallen in a Time and Place of Temptation; therefore we have need to pray, *Lord, lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil*. It is our Duty to watch and pray, yet God himself must keep us, for we are no Match for

our spiritual Enemies ; these Principalities and Powers. *If the Lord does not keep the City, the Watchmen wake in vain*, Psal. cxxviii. 1.

III. We have an Account of the Practice of these good Men, [those that *feared the Lord*] how they lived, and how they employed their Time.

1. They *thought upon the Name of the Lord*.

2. They *spake one to another*, and they did it often.

1. They *thought upon the Name of the Lord*. This is not intended of a few transient, accidental, and undesigned Thoughts : But with Design, deliberately, and with close Attention, with Love and Affection, and with Faith in, and Submission to the Will of God.

The Name of God is intended to signify every Thing, whereby God maketh himself known.

(1.) The Perfections of God ; these are the Name of God. These are a most excellent Subject for the Thoughts of good Men. The Wisdom of God that made, and now orders all Things in Heaven and Earth.

The Power of God, that upholds all Things.

The Holiness of God, whence he hates all Sin.

The Justice of God, whereby he will take Vengeance of all his implacable Enemies, and will plead the Cause of his injured People, in every Age and Nation.

The Mercy, and Goodness, and Grace of God : He is *kind to all*, his *tender Mercies are over all his Works*, he is *kind to the Unthankful*, and *to the Evil*. But he extends his *special Goodness* to

to them that are *upright in Heart*, Psal. lxxiii.
1.

The Truth and Faithfulness of God, whereby he makes good his Threatnings against impenitent Sinners; and his Promises to all them that love and fear him, and keep his Commandments.

(2.) They thought upon the Word of God; that is, his Name: For God is known by it.

If we love the Word of God, it will be the Matter of our Thoughts, and that frequently. *Psal. cxix. 97. O how do I love thy Law! [thy whole revealed Will] it is my Meditation all the Day.* Thus we may judge of the Goodness of our Hearts, not by the Strength of our Memories, but by our Love to it, and Delight in it. Some may remember the Word of God, either read or preached better than others can do; but this may be done without Love to it. He that thinks and speaks of the Word of God, without Faith and Love, is little profited by his Thoughts, tho' they are many; or by his Memory, tho' it may be strong. The Thoughts here taken Notice of, and written in God's *Book of Remembrance*; were such as were accompany'd with Faith, Love, and sincere Obedience.

(3.) They thought upon the Works of God. They also are the Name of God: For much of his Perfections are known thereby.

[1.] God's Work of Creation. *How wonderful are thy Works, O Lord, in Wisdom hast thou made them all. Psal. xix. 1. The Heavens declare the Glory of GOD, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work. Psal. viii. 3, 4. When I consider the Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which thou hast ordained; what is Man,*

that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?

There is nothing of all that God has made, but may afford some profitable Thoughts.

[2.] The Providences of God, both towards our selves and others. His Care is constant, Night and Day, of those that sin against him. But he is kind to *Israel*, to such as are of a clean Heart.

[3.] They thought upon their own Experiences, what God had done for their own Souls. How he had shewn his Power, and Love, and Pity, and Faithfulness towards them; hearing their Prayers, fulfilling his Promises. How he had been a present Help in Trouble: For we may well suppose, that they think of the same Things that they speak of one to another.

[4.] The great Work of Redemption of Sinners by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of his Love. Here is the Mind that hath Wisdom. Here is Scope for the most sublime and most enlarged Thoughts of every gracious Heart, and that as long as they live. This is *Love that passeth Knowledge*. And yet it is the Believers Duty to search after further Knowledge of it; that their Hearts may be inflamed with Love to God in Christ, till the Heart and Tongue are filled with Praise; and till the Love of Christ constrains the whole Man to a suitable Behaviour, in the whole Course of Life.

Thus, by the Byass and Current of their Thoughts, we may learn the Change of the Heart. The Spring of evil Thoughts is corrupt Nature, *Gen. vi. 5*. Every one hath a Fountain of evil Thoughts in their Heart; though some abound with these more than others. And evil Thoughts are more common with Men than evil

Words,

Words, or Actions. All are not suffered to break forth into Lying, or Swearing, or Cursing, or Blasphemy. All are not carried out to speak wicked Words, but all have evil Thoughts. Out of the evil Treasure of the Heart nothing but Evil can come : vain, unfavoury, corrupt Conversation. But when the Course of the Thoughts is turned from Sin to Holiness, then the Heart is changed. O what a Mercy have they obtained, that can truly say, I hate vain Thoughts. Then may we know that the great and necessary Work of Holiness is begun in the Soul ; for now the Thoughts of the Heart are turned into another Channel. The Soul is choosing new Matter for them, and when it can keep them close to divine Things, then the Soul enjoys it self best. That's the first Part of the Description of the Practice of these good Men. *They thought upon the Name of GOD.* This was the Delight of their Souls.

2. *They spake often one to another.*

Therefore they did not carry themselves strange one to another : But contrary to that, these good Men chose each others Company. Wicked Men have their Company ; their own Companions, such as they love and choose, such as they take Delight in. And good Men have their own Company ; but they are Men of a very different Spirit and Temper from the Company of the Wicked. These good Men choose for their Companions, Men of gracious Hearts, and good Lives ; Men that speak the same Language with themselves. *Acts iv.*
 23. It is said of the Apostles, *being let go, they went to their own Company* ; that is, to their Fellow-Disciples, those that had prayed together, and had heard the Word of GOD together, those that had enjoyed sweet Communion

nion together : Citizens of the same City ; not *For-
eigners* and *Strangers*, but *Fellow-Citizens with
the Saints*, and of the *Household of GOD*, Eph.
ii. 19.

Now I shall shew you what these good Men
spake one to another ; and accordingly wherein we
should labour to imitate them ; that we may shew
to others, that we are such as *fear the Lord*, and
think upon his Name.

It was not talking for Talk-sake, or disputing
of religious Matter, for Argument-sake ; but to
profit their own and others Souls. Not barely to
talk over the Word of God, or other good Things,
this was not all ; but to have their Hearts affected
with what they spake or heard ; and with a De-
sign to be *Doers of the Word*, not *Hearers only*,
whereby some *deceive their Souls*, James i. 22.
This should be our Concern also, or else, while
some may look on themselves to be good Christians,
because they know more, or can talk more of the
Things of God than others ; yet may be far from
having profitable Thoughts and Discourse of God :
For Knowledge without Practice will never bring
any Man to eternal Happiness. *If ye know these
Things, happy are ye if ye do them*, John xiii. 17.
As the Nature of the Tree is known by the Fruit
it bears, so the gracious Thoughts and Words of
Men, are good Evidences of a gracious Heart,
when they are attended with a godly Life. Doubt-
less these good Men spake of what they thought of
before ; of God and the Things of God ; for
*out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth
speaketh*. Worldly Men speak of the Things of
this World ; rich Men of their Riches ; carnal Men
of their carnal Pleasures and sensual Delights.
*He that is of the Earth is earthly, and speaketh of
the*

the Earth. Vain Men delight in vain Discourse ; so on the contrary, *a good Man, out of the good Treasure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is good,* Matt. xii. 33. If you would know what is in a Man's Heart, watch his Lips ; for his Speech will bewray him. As the Treasure of the Heart is, so will the Speech be. As the Fountain is, such will the Streams be. If the Lips are uncircumcised, the Heart is so too. And if the *Lips are touched with a live Coal from the Altar,* the Heart is sanctified also. Besides, what these holy Men spake might be gather'd from this one Consideration ; That what they spake was pleasing to God ; therefore it must be *that which was good, to the Use of Edifying, that it might minister Grace to the Hearers.* But now I shall answer this more particularly.

(1.) We may reasonably suppose that they spake of the sad Declension of Religion, in their Day.

[1.] How Iniquity abounded ; what bare-fac'd Impiety was in every Street ; what horrid Oaths and Cursing ; what Drunkenness and Debauchery, from the highest to the lowest ; what falsifying of Promises.

What fatal Degeneracy among the Children of good Men. These Things cannot but pierce the Hearts of gracious Persons. And that which goes deep with them, is, that some Professors *hold the Truth in Unrighteousness,* Rom. i. 18. They hold the Word of God, in their Hands and in their Heads, but they hold fast their Sins too ; therefore are, and at last will be found to be the Enemies of Jesus Christ, and the Gospel, as they are Workers of Iniquity.

[2.] That the Love of many Professors waxed cold. That there was but little Love, and little Life

Life or Liveliness, among Christians. Though there might be much Heat and Passion among Professors, yet but little true Zeal for God and Godliness among them. And they made these Things the Matter of their Discourse one with another; not so much to spy out the Faults of others; but to make this the Matter of their Prayers to God, that he might pour out his Spirit upon the Churches, to give more Grace, and draw out that living Principle to guide and rule the whole Man. That Christians might show more Humility, and less Pride; more Meekness, and less Passion; more Love and Forbearance, and less Suspicion, Surmizing, and Censoriousness.

[3.] They might speak one to another, to bewail Professors Conformity to this present evil World. How little Self-denial; how little Humility; No taking up the Cross; that Mark of Discipleship to Jesus Christ is rare to be found, even among those that desire to retain the Name of Disciples of Christ.

It is much easier to see many taking more Care to dress the Body, than to have the Soul adorned with Grace; shewing more Concern about perishing Things, than for true Riches. These surely must have most of their Thoughts and Hearts; for these are the common Subject of their Talk.

[4.] They might speak one to another, of the Need of Christian Conference, to keep alive the Work of God, upon their own and others Souls; and so much the rather, because the Power of Religion lies in very few Hands. This godly Exercise has been often found to be a very warming, strengthening, and comforting Exercise to the People of God; that they could say to each other, ^{as} the

the Disciples did, upon Christ's conversing with them, *Luke xxiv. 32. Did not our Heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the Way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?*

[5.] They might speak one to another, kindly to admonish each other, to beware of the common Infection. They put each other in Mind of the necessary Counsel God himself has left with all his People to walk by; *Heb. iii. 13. Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin. Acts ii. 40. Save your selves from this untoward Generation.*

One Generation may be more untoward than another. That you may judge whether ours is so or not, and what need we have to save our selves from it;

I will just hint to you, what is an untoward Generation.

1. It is such as hath turned aside from the Rule of God's Word, and as walks by the Example of a vain World, when Men are generally corrupt in their Language, and in their Lives.

2. An untoward Generation, is such as hath the Means appointed of God, to turn them about to the right Way, but are not willing to know the Way. *Psal. lxxxi. 11. My People [the Tribes of Israel] would not hearken to my Voice, and Israel would have none of me.*

3. That abuse the Long-Suffering of God that should lead them to Repentance; because the Lord God, gracious and merciful, does not stir up all his Wrath, and execute Vengeance speedily; *Therefore the Hearts of Men are fully set in them to do Evil, Eccles. viii. 11.*

4. That's

4. That's an untoward Generation, that sinneth against the Threatnings, and the Judgments of GOD. *Isai. i. 5. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more.* Hereby they shew the Atheism, and Infidelity, and Hardness of their Heart, and the Rebellion of their Will.

But, we are charg'd to save our selves; though Salvation is of the Lord, yet we must save our selves: *Phil. ii. 12, 13. Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling: For it is GOD that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his own good Pleasure.*

GOD's sovereign Grace in Salvation, and Man's Duty, do not contradict one another. Our Acting, or Working, in order to Salvation, does not make the Reward [of Glory] to be of Debt: For *by Grace are ye saved through Faith, and that not of your selves, it is the Gift of GOD; not of Works, least any Man should boast, Eph. ii. 8, 9.* Now, what we should save our selves from, are,

(1.) From their vain sinful Conversation; *We should not follow a Multitude to do Evil, Exod. xxiii. 2. Thou shalt not, &c.*

(2.) As much as we can, we should abstain from their Company, unless our Relation to them, or our necessary Trading with them, call us hereto. But not unnecessarily seek their Company, unless we have some good End to be serv'd thereby.

(3.) To save our selves from Sinners, is, to keep a strict Watch over our Hearts, and Words, and Actions, and commit our selves to GOD, *who is able to keep us from falling, Jude 24.*

(4.) It

(4.) It is also, to act quite contrary to the untoward Generation that we live in. Not out of Moroseness and Singularity, as some have done, contradicting others in what is good, or really innocent, as well as in that which is evil. This is not the Way to promote Religion, but rather to hinder it, and render the Professors of Religion ridiculous. We are commanded to *let our Light so shine before Men, that they, seeing our good Works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven*, Matt. v. 16. But then we must look to it, that our Works are good; done according to the Rule of God's Word, else they are never like to provoke others to *glorify GOD*.

[6.] They spake one to another, probably of the last Message they had received from the Lord: And this they did to revive and strengthen each others Memories, and inform them what the Word of God had been to their Souls, that they might warm each others Hearts. And so should we do by the last Sermon we heard, not presently run into Discourse of worldly Matters: This has been found to be very mischievous to Religion; it is like thrusting a hot Iron into Water, which not only cools it, but makes it much harder. You hear some complaining of the Treachery of their Memories: If this is truly an Affliction to any one, surely such should be the more careful, not only how they hear, but also that they do not let it slip; or rather, that they do not choak the Word, and thrust it out of their Minds. Such, above all others, should talk over what they have heard; and as Iron sharpens Iron, so will one Christian help another, and the better fasten in their Memory what they had before. You may depend upon it, that the Sermon

mon that is not in the Mouth of the Hearer, has not much warm'd the Heart.

[7.] It may be suppos'd, that they spake one to another, of the State of the Souls of their poor Relations, and others that were round about them ; which truly call'd for Pity, and Prayer, and Godly Advice, and Counsel. So should we, that, if possible, we may pluck some of them as Brands out of the Burning.

[8.] They might speak, what have been, and what are their present Temptations ; whence they arose, and what were the Means of their Support under them ; and by what Means they were deliver'd out of them ; and what Profit they have obtain'd in the End by them. So they might do by other Afflictions, saying, how, *Out of them all the Lord had delivered them*, 2 Tim. iii. 11.

[9.] They might speak one to another, to enquire, What were the Duties of their Day ? What the Providences of GOD call for from themselves, and from others ? What they should do to stem the Tide of Vanity and Profaneness, and be happily instrumental in promoting a necessary Reformation ? How each might reform their own Families ? What Duties had been neglected ? And, what Sins committed ? And think, in what Manner Duties had been perform'd, and how they might promote Piety in their Day ! *The Children of this World are wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light*, Luke xvi. 8.

They consult one with another, What News ? How goes the Trade on ? Do Stocks rise or fall ? They enquire, How they may dispose of what they have to the best Advantage ? Or, how, and where they may recruit their Stock, when it is low ? Where they

they may meet with proper Chapmen? So should the *Children of Light* do: They should enquire, What are my Talents? What is my Work? How may I serve the Souls of others? Who, among the Multitude, is an attentive Hearer of the Word? Who seems to be under hopeful Convictions? How may I be helpful to their Souls? Who need Counsel, and whose Case calls for Prayer? Here, Christian, thy Work lies, and by Faithfulness herein, you will be Workers together with God, and with your faithful Ministers, and be Fellow-Helpers to the Truth.

Thus I have shewn you what these approved People of God spake of, what was their common Language; and I have also shewn you, what wicked Men speak of one to another. Now, Professor, come hither, and look in this Glass; behold thy Face: What is in thy Heart? What is thy common Discourse? How dost thou spend thy Time? Of what sort are thy Visits? Are they spent in telling merry Stories to entertain the Company? Is thy Discourse of News that little concerns thy self, or others with thee? Is it of Fields, and Cattle, and Corn; Markets and Fairs, Shops and Goods, Fashions and Dresses, Horses and Hounds? Or, of the Weaknesses and Infirmities of others? Are these what Christians should spend their Time in? Have you nothing else but Rubbish in your Hearts? Is there no Treasure of Grace there? What! No Tongue or Heart for God? Nay, but how is it that thy Tongue is often so vain, and thy Speech unfavoury? Do you think this is the Speaking one to another that is recorded in Heaven? Yes, verily it is; *For every idle Word that Men speak, shall they give Account, at the Day of Judgment*, Matt. xii. 36. God hearkens and hears this too: But,

surely, none can think, that such Discourse is what the Lord is pleas'd with. Ah ! Sirs, We have had too much of this already ; we have almost lost the Life and Power of Godliness, by the frothy, light, and vain Speech and Conversation of some Professors ; *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners*. Hereby many are defiled, precious Time is wasted, the Minds of the Hearers rendred vain, instead of having an Example of Seriousness. It is said, *Luke iv. 22*. That many *wondered at the gracious Words that proceeded out of the Mouth of Christ*. But if we listen sometimes to the Discourse of some that call themselves his Disciples, we may wonder to hear the ungracious Words that proceed out of their Mouths.

Let us examine our selves every Time we patr with any Company, or dispatch any necessary Business ; and every Night, Whither have my Thoughts made a Road to Day ? Have they been with God ? How did I behave my self in Company ? Was I vain or serious ? Did I aim at gaining Good from them, or at doing Good to others ? If not, reckon that a lost Opportunity.

Now I shall shew you, what Things are necessary, in order to have the Thoughts and the Speech of Professors more spiritual, savory, season'd with Grace, and so more profitable to themselves and others ; and more ornamental to Religion.

(1.) The Heart must be changed, and established with Grace. There must be a good Treasure of the Heart. *Matt. xii. 35*. *A good Man, out of the good Treasure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is good. And an evil Man, out of the evil Treasure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is evil*. There must be a good Fountain of Grace in the Soul, or else the Streams will

will not run clear or constant. There must be a new Principle of Grace in the Heart, where good Thoughts may be framed, and whence good Words may flow naturally [I mean according to the new Nature] as Water, in a constant Stream, more or less. Not good Words forc'd out of the Mouth by some awakening Ordinance, as hearing the Word ; or by some threatening Affliction : When some have used many good Words, and said many Prayers, and made many great Promises how good they would be, if God would spare them but this once. And who could not wish, O that there was such an Heart in them ! These Startlings have often come to nothing. These have often mocked God, and cheated their Friends, and deceiv'd their own Souls, and become more harden'd Sinners than before. *Herod* heard *John* gladly, and did many Things : He was much taken with his Preaching ; but, for all that, if *John* will touch upon *Herod's* beloved Sin, he must lose his Life for it. So *Ezekiel's* Hearers were pleas'd with his Sermons ; *He was to them as one that could play well on an Instrument*, [of Music] but they had no Concern to do the Word, which they seem'd to hear with Delight. Thus the Seed of the Word, sown on stony Ground, may spring up, and endure for a while, through Strength of natural Memory, or common Affections ; but there being no Depth of Earth, [no Principle of Grace in the Heart] these forced Affections will quickly grow cold again, like Water heated, and then removed from the Fire : For this Warmth was only forced. There must be a living Spring in the Soul, or else good Thoughts, and good Words, which Professors may have, now and then, will be but like a Stream, made by an hasty Rain, which may run for a while, that is,

as long as the Thunder-Storm holds ; but in a little while the Stream is dry'd up, and that which some might take for a constant River, is found to be but a dry Ditch ; because there is no Spring to supply and maintain it. So it is with those, in whose Hearts there is no Spring of Grace, or Well of living Water to supply the Stream of good Thoughts, or good Words ; they are quickly dry'd up, and his Thoughts are again of the Earth, and Sin, and Vanity ; nothing in this Ditch but Mire and Dirt ; his Speech bewrayeth him, and shews what is in his Heart. *The Wicked is like the troubled Sea, that casteth up Mire and Dirt.* Tho' here's a vast Difference, the Sea does this to purge it self ; Sinners by doing so are the more defiled. So that Thoughts are not to be counted good, that may pass through the Heart ; but what dwells there. Nor may Words be counted good, that are forced by Afflictions, but such as are the Choice and Delight of the Soul ; when good Words run in the voluntary Channel, from the Heart to the Mouth. Some Persons Convictions and Promises, are like a hasty Storm, that makes much Noise, but is quickly over ; others, are like the gentle Rain, that sinks deep, and is more profitable to the Ground : Or, like a Spring that runs even and constant, unless interrupted by something in its Way. So do gracious Words, and good Thoughts, from a gracious Heart ; unless they are interrupted by Darkness and Temptation, or necessary Business.

(2.) That the Thoughts and Words of Professors may be more savory, spiritual, and profitable ; there is need of a new Lift from Heaven, to draw the Heart and Affections toward Heaven. The Soul has Wings [Affections] but if it has no Influences

Influences from Heaven, it cannot mount up toward Heaven. The Soul, like the Eagle, may flutter its Wings, and must do so ; that is, he must read, and hear, and pray, and meditate, and converse with those that are good : Thus with Wings and Feet it may attempt to mount up toward Heaven, but cannot ; because there is no fresh Gale stirring : We need, therefore, to pray, *Awake, O North Wind, and come thou South [Wind] and blow upon my Garden.* What Breath we breathe towards Heaven, we must first receive from Heaven ; and what we receive from Heaven, we should return to Heaven. And then we may say to God, as *David* did, *Of thine own have I given thee.* It is not enough that the Soul be alive, but it needs to be lively ; it is not enough that the living Soul is moving and acting for God, and thinking, and speaking of, and for him : But these should be done with Delight. *They that are after the Flesh, do mind [relish or favour] the Things of the Flesh ; and they that are after the Spirit, [do mind or favour] the Things of the Spirit,* Rom. iii. 5. And such are concern'd to promote the Life and Power of Godliness in their own Souls, and others.

(3.) That our Thoughts and Words may be more savory, spiritual, and profitable ; we should be frequent and fervent in Prayer. Tho' our Cure must come from God, yet we must look to him for his healing, as the great Physician.

[1.] We should pray, that God would mortify our immoderate Affections to this World. Inordinate Love to the World will ever be mischievous to the Power of Godliness. Too much Love to the World will fill the Mind and Mouth with the World. And too much Delight in carnal Pleasures,

tures, will fill the Heart with Thoughts, and the Mouth with Words agreeable thereto : What the Heart approves of, the Tongue loves to speak of. *Matt. xii. 34. Out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh.*

[2.] We should pray for sanctify'd Affections, that God will teach and help us to spiritualize every Thing that we meet with ; and to turn earthly Occurrences into some spiritual Thoughts ; that so we may be led by the Stream to the Fountain, from the Creature to the Creator ; from Earth to Heaven. And, that we, as spiritual Chymists, might extract some valuable useful Thing out of every Subject that we think of, or every Object that we behold. Thus might we have our *Conversations* more in Heaven, *Phil. iii. 20.* Where our Hearts and Thoughts ought to be. Some of the Things that we behold, or speak of every Day, shew the Power or Wisdom of God ; others shew his Goodness. We need Help from God in this Matter : *We are not sufficient of our selves to think a good Thought ; all our Sufficiency is of GOD,* *2 Cor. iii. 5.* Therefore we should pray for sanctify'd Affections.

(4.) Fix upon some one Thing to be thought of, and not upon many Things at once. The Bees fly from Trees to Plants, and from one Flower to a Thousand others ; and regard nothing but the Moisture of the Flowers : We must not do so in our Meditations : We must stay a while upon the Thing (not to fall asleep, as the Drone does on the Flower, but) to take the more exact Notice of the Works of God, which are all wonderful, that we may see God in them. And whatever we make the Matter of our Meditation, we should never dismiss it willingly, till some Grace or other

is

is drawn out to its Exercise, whether it is Faith in, or Love to, or Delight in God, or his Word; or holy Admiration of his Perfections, display'd in his Works. To think a few good Thoughts of every Thing, is the Way to gain little by any Thing. This would be to view the Works of God, as a Bird does, in its hasty Flight over them; it looks on the Earth in general, but considers nothing.

Now, if any ask, What they should think of? I answer,

(1.) Of the Mysteries of the Gospel. Three divine Persons in one God, all equal in Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and Truth: Into which Holy Trinity we were baptized, and to whom we were dedicated, *Matt. xxviii. 19.* The great Mystery of the Union of our Nature, with the divine Person of the Son of God, *Isa. vii. 14. Matt. i. 23.* The Mystery of Believers Union with Jesus Christ, by Faith, *John xvii. 23.* together with the Spring, or *moving Cause*; and also the blessed Fruits and Effects of it; Pardon of Sin, Freedom from Condemnation, Peace with God, all necessary Grace and Glory it self.

[2.] The glorious Works of God. These are worthy of our best Thoughts. How wonderful are thy Works!

(1.) The Work of Creation: The Heavens, the Earth, the Seas, with their Inhabitants. What profitable Thoughts might an humble Christian draw from any one of these?

(2.) The Providence and universal Government of God. The Eyes of his Providence behold the Evil and the Good. What a numerous Family has God to take Care of! And none of them all are left out of his Providence, or exempted from his daily Care.

(3.) There

(3.) There is the great Work of redeeming fallen Sinners, from Wrath by Jesus Christ. Here's Matter for profitable Thoughts all the Day. And what so humbling, and yet what so sweet, as to think of redeeming Love and Grace; the Value of Christ's Death and Sufferings; the Virtue of his Blood and Obedience; the blessed Fruits of Christ's Ascension and Intercession at the Right Hand of God. *Eph. iii. 19. And to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge.*

[3.] Of the Original, the Nature, Worth, and Excellency of our own Soul, which was made in the Image of God; and is of more Value than the whole World.

[4.] Of Holiness, what it is, wherein it consists; and the Necessity of it, both for the Service of God here, and for the Enjoyment of God hereafter, *Heb. xii. 14.*

[5.] We should think of the Certainty of Death; what it will be to the Wicked; and what it will be to the Godly; and what will make any one meet for that awful Hour; and what Meetness we our selves may suppose and hope we have already obtained; what good Hope through Grace we have, that Death will be our Gain, as it will surely be to all good Men. *Phil. i. 21. To me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain.*

[6.] We should think also of the great Judgment-Day: How terrible it will be to all the Wicked. *Jesus Christ will be revealed in flaming Fire from Heaven, taking Vengeance on them that know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* O what a dreadful Day will that be, when all impenitent Sinners will hear that

that dreadful Sentence, *Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels ! There their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.* And we should think also, what that great Day will be to all good Men ; how joyful to all that are in Christ. It will be a Day of Redemption to them ; *Luke xxi. 28. Lift up your Heads, for your Redemption draweth nigh.* Freedom from all Sin and Sorrow.

[7.] We should think also of the Joys of Heaven ; the Blessedness, the Work and Entertainment of the Saints above. Where will be perfect Peace, and perfect Holiness. There they shall see *Jesus Christ as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. and be made like him ; and there they shall be *ever with the Lord*, 1 Theff. iv. 17, 18. *Wherefore comfort one another with these Words, or with these Things.*

[8.] Any Thing that our Eyes behold, any Thing that we hear of, any Occurrence of Providence relating to our selves or others, may be the Matter of our Meditation ; provided we make it our Care to spiritualize every Thing as much as we can. If our Minds were spiritual, we should see, or hear, or meet with nothing, but what would speak something to us, for our own and others Profit ; we should see God in the Creatures, Heaven in earthly Things ; we should enjoy Comfort in all our Troubles, though sorrowing yet always rejoicing : We should have some Sweet with our Bitters. Our Journey through this World would not be so tiresome ; our Converse with others would be more profitable ; much Evil might be prevented, and our Souls be more fit for religious Duties ; and Men would lie much easier upon their Death-Beds. Here I would just give a Hint
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of some of these Things that hinder Christians from *speaking one to another* the Things that might make for the Profit of their own and others Souls.

Christian Conference may be hindered,

(1.) By sinful Modesty and Bashfulness: Their Silence may proceed from too mean Thoughts of themselves. This is no Virtue, but really an Error: It is an *hiding of their Talent under a Bushel*. And such may do well to ask at their Hearts, if there is not a little Pride at the Bottom of their Silence? Whether they are not loth to speak, because they cannot speak so much, or so well as others; and so are afraid to discover their Ignorance.

(2.) Christian Conference may be hindered, through the Lightness and Vanity of the Minds of some Persons. When some Professors meet, their chief Talk is, What News? How the Markets go? What others do or say? And so they liberally pass their Censures on others Words and Actions. Reflecting on such as are not present to answer for themselves. Exposing the Weaknesses of those that they should rather pity and pray for. So that though there are Words enough, yet there is little Christian Charity.

(3.) Christian Conference may be hindered, by *Want of Love* to the Persons of good Christians, and to their godly Discourse. They do not *speaking often one to another*, because they seldom see one another; and they seldom see each other, because they want Love to each other. And from their Want of Love, they are ready to put a wrong Construction upon others Words and Actions: And as they are quick at taking Offence, so they know not how or when to forgive; such *know not what Spirit they are of*. (4.)

(4.) Christian Conference may be hindered, by too much Business in the World. They are in so much Hurry, that they have not convenient Time to think or speak of the Affairs of another World. They can talk of the World, when you will, and as long as you please ; but they reckon it out of the Way, and in a Manner so much Time lost, to be ever employed in any religious Exercises.

I shall now endeavour to shew you how your Conferences, especially stated Christian Conferences, may be managed to the best Advantage ; and so as may redound to the greater Profit and Comfort of all.

(1.) Meddle not with any Thing above your Reach, unless it is to speak of it by humble Enquiry, desiring to be informed by others that you may suppose are able to inform you ; for you ought to consider your selves as Learners, not Teachers of others.

(2.) Have a Care of Contention, and warm Disputes about little Matters, and Things that are indifferent in Religion : All do not see with the same Eyes. Heats commonly hinder Edification, and occasion Estrangement among Christians. Remember, and endeavour to learn that needful Lesson, *Phil. ii. 3. Let nothing be done through Strife, and Vain-glory, but in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.*

(3.) If any Difference may arise about any Scripture, or Doctrine to be believed, or any Duty to be practised ; have a Care your Passion does not rise too : Beware of self, and have a Care of being too positive ; refer your selves to your Minister, but if you agree not to do so, let each pray for God's Teaching ; for how positive soever any may be, of any received Notion, he may see Reason to change

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his Opinion. Therefore, as far as may be, be all of the same Mind. Let not private Notions hinder Christian Conversation. *Rom. xiv. 22. Hast thou Faith, have it to thy self; that is, keep thy private Opinions to thy self.*

(4.) Choose out such Subjects to be talk'd of, that may be profitable to all, and give no just Occasion of Offence to any.

[1.] You may speak of the last Sermon that you heard, or some one Branch of it; not with a Design to cavil at it, or to talk of the Minister's Weaknesses; then you had better not speak at all. Ministers must be supposed to do their best: But they see Weaknesses in themselves, and bewail them before God, and would be glad if they could do better. And if you did but love them more, you would pray more for them, and pass the fewer Censures on their Labours. *You ought to esteem them highly in Love for their Work sake.* But you ought to talk of the last Sermon, to strengthen each others Memories, and to inform one anothers Judgments; to warm the Affections, and to strengthen Grace, and to quicken to some Christian Duty.

[2.] Your Subject of Discourse may be, how you may do most Service to the Interest of Christ; how you may most promote Religion; what you may do, or what is thought to be your Duty towards the Stopping of the strong Torrent of Sin, where you live; and how you may *shine as Lights in the World.*

[3.] Your own Experiences may be the Subject of your Discourse in proper Time and Place. Christians must not always dwell upon the same Subject; to harp always on the same String, makes no grateful Musick. *We must forget the Things that are behind,* [not so as to be unthankful for them;

them ; but so as not to rest in them] and *press forward towards the Mark*, for more Grace, and more Experience, *Phil. iii. 13.*

[4.] Your Subject of Discourse may be, how to improve your Talent, in helping those that are awakened, under the Word, or by the Providences of God, to an hopeful Concern about their Salvation.

It is not to be expected, that these Beginners will enquire after you, or come of their own Accord, and tell you what are their present Fears, or Hopes, or Desires. Fear or Shame may make them conceal their present Thoughts ; therefore you should search after them. Thus might you often be happily surprized with Joy in your own Souls, and be Fellow-helpers to the Truth ; and bring your Ministers *good Tidings of great Joy* ; that is, of the Success of their own, or of others Ministry, or of both. And thus both you and your Minister may rejoice together, that you have a new Testimony that God is among you, owning the Gospel, and hearing your own Prayers.

(5.) Have a Care of continuing the Exercise too long. And that's too long, when other necessary Duties are omitted thereby. One Duty ought not to shut out another. *Every Thing is beautiful in its Season.*

(6.) Choose your Company among such as may profit you, or to whom you may be serviceable, by discoursing together ; or else you had even as good say nothing. Other Company you must sometimes fall into, by reason of necessary Business, or out of Civility, (for our holy Religion does not teach us ill Manners, but on the contrary, to be courteous) or because of our Relation to graceless Persons, &c. (for Grace teaches us our Duty in

every Relation.) But we now speak only of making Choice of Companions : That should be as near as we can of such as fear God, and *think upon his Name*. So David did ; *Psal. cxix. 63. I am a Companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy Precepts.*

(7.) Go no where, nor stay longer than you dare to ask the Presence of God with you. This would cut off many useless unprofitable Visits, and would tend to prevent the consuming of much precious Time, now shamefully wasted in nothing better than unprofitable Discourse. Many think, if they come off with good Manners, they have done well ; but if this is enough for a civil Neighbour, should it be thought to be enough for a good Christian ?

It is not enough for Christians, that they do not poyson or infect others, but they ought to attempt the Profit of others. *Col. iv. 6. Let your Speech be always with Grace, seasoned with Salt.*

It is very afflicting to think of the lawless Liberty that some Professors take, in spending many Hours in Eating and Drinking, one Day after another ; as if they were imitating those that *make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*. Such can hardly think, at that Time, of the Straits of many Godly-poor. Surely they ought to consult the *Good of their Souls*, that provide so plentifully for their own Bodies. But what Pity is it that a well-spread Table should have so little of God, of Grace, and divine Things at it. These are too much like the wanton *Israelites*, that *sat down to eat and drink, and then rose up to play*, 1 Cor. x. 7.

(8.) Watch Occasions, in all Company to drop something serious. And it is best to begin it quickly ;

quickly ; for if it is, not taken up, and carried on by others, yet it may lay a good Restraint upon the Company, and prevent much vain Discourse.

You often change your Company, but you should not change your Conversation. Speak to the Profit of the Company, or say nothing. But shall Christians meet and part, and say nothing of God, redeemed Ones, Children of God, Heirs of Glory ! Shall they visit one the other, Brethren and Sisters in Christ, without speaking of their common Father, their Home, their Inheritance ! Shall they act as if they never knew, or have no Love to God ! When *English-Men* are in a Foreign Land, they are glad to speak one to another, in their own Language ; and of the Affairs of their own Country, and are glad to hear of Relations. And Persons of the same Calling will advise one with another. What do you think of your selves, are you Children of God ? What, and born dumb ! Have you nothing to say of, or for God, or have you no Heart to say it ? Sure you want Life or Liveliness. *Acts iv. 20. We cannot but speak the Things that we have seen and heard.*

(9.) Pray for Wisdom to spiritualize every Thing ; and to turn every Stream of Discourse into the right Channel. Our Lord Jesus Christ set us a good Example herein, *Luke xiv. 15.* When one that sat at Meat, said, *Blessed is he that shall eat Bread in the Kingdom of GOD :* Our Lord Jesus took Occasion from thence, to discourse to them of the great Gospel-Feast which God had made, and unto which they are call'd by the Gospel. How happy was it for all the Company, that one among them should drop such a Word !

So when the *Jews* told our Lord Jesus Christ of the great Honour that God had conferr'd on their Fore-Fathers, in feeding them with *Manna*, or *Bread from Heaven*; our Lord Jesus Christ takes Occasion to discourse to them of himself, both as *the Bread of Life*, and *the Gift of the Father*; and more necessary for *the Life of their Souls*, than the *Manna* was for the Life of *the Bodies* of their Fathers, *John vi. 31 — 35*. So when one told him, That *his Mother* and *his Brethren* stood *without*, desiring to see him, *Matt. xii. 47*. He answered, *Who is my Mother?* And, *who are my Brethren?* And stretching out his Hand toward his Disciples, he said, *Bekold my Mother and my Brethren: For whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother*. This was an happy Speech for his Disciples. So when his Disciples said to him, of the Temple, *See what goodly Buildings are here*, *Luke xxi. 5*. He took Occasion to tell them of the Desolations of *Jerusalem*; and to teach us not to rest in the highest Enjoyments we have in this World. And when some told him of *the Galileans*, whose Blood Pilate mingled with the Sacrifices, *Luke xiii. 1*. He said, *Think ye that those were Sinners above all Men? I tell you nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish*. And when his Disciples prayed him, saying, *Master eat*; he said, *I have Meat to eat that ye know not of: My Meat is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his Work*, *John iv. 31, 32, 34*.

This Method would tend to make our Visits more profitable, which [for the most Part] are not so now. And I question not, but are sometimes a great Trouble to some serious consciencious Christians;

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Christians ; when they think, what an unsanctified Table they have sat round so long, without one Word of GOD, of Christ, or of heavenly Things. What do you think, Sirs, that it is unmannerly to talk like Christians, in the Company of those that visit you ? Surely no. However, try and see. But if you can meet and part after long sitting together, without any profitable Discourse, then let it be said, here dwells a poor, cold, indifferent Professor.

(10.) There is need to watch the Heart when alone ; for such as our Thoughts are, such are our Words like to be ; and such as Men are, when alone, such they will be in Company : If Men allow their Thoughts to rove, and to be light, and vain, and trifling, and unprofitable ; so are their Words like to be, when they are in Company.

(11.) Be very careful to maintain Communion with GOD in Christ, or else you will be very unfit to converse with others, either to their Profit, or your own. It is good to converse much with those that walk with GOD, and that keep up free Correspondence and Intercourse with Heaven. This tends to the Joy as well as to the Profit of Souls. By this Exercise many have been made to say, *Did not our Hearts burn within us while we were talking by the Way ?* And by holding Communion together in spiritual Things, they have also had Communion with GOD in Christ. 1 John i. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have Fellowship with us ; and truly our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your Joy may be full.* So that we must never expect, either to be comfortable

fortable or useful Christians, unless we take care to walk with God. A dead Coal will not warm others, having neither Light nor Heat in it. If any one, through Temptation, is prevailed upon to omit any Duty or Ordinance, or else to be partial and formal in them, then all *runs backward* in the Soul ; then is he unfit for other Duties, or to meet with Afflictions. If Men omit their Duties, they omit their Meals, and then the Soul languishes. By Ordinances, we go to the full Fountain, Christ Jesus ; the Ordinances are some of the Wells of Salvation, and thro' Faith and Prayer we draw Water out of them, when it pleases God to fill the Pools. But he that neglects the Ordinances of God, surely has little to say to God, and such an one has little to say of God. And what can such an one have to say of themselves, unless it be to complain of their Leanness, Darkness, Doubts, and Fears !

Thus we have taken Notice of the third Thing in the Words, *viz.* The Practice of those that feared the Lord ; how they lived, and how they employ'd their Time : And, that is in two Things : *They thought upon the Name of GOD, and they spake often one to another.*

Now we are to observe,

IV. How God treated these good Men, and what Regard he had to what they thought and spake. This is express'd in several Things.

(1.) That God hearken'd, and heard what they spake ; Harkening is more than Hearing.

To hearken, denotes an Inclination of the Mind, and an Engagement of the Affections, and supposes a Desire to hear and know ; and also a Delight in that which is heard.

Brethren, Let us remember, that the Eye of GOD is upon us, wherever we are, and whatever we are doing ; and that GOD's Ear is open to hear what we speak. When it is said, that GOD hearken'd and heard, it necessarily supposes, that those gracious Persons spake something, and something to the Purpose too.

Some Professors [O how lifeless are they !] will not put forward any good Discourse where they come ; nor will they further it when set on Foot by others : But they sit silent, and say nothing at all, till the Discourse is turn'd about again to some worldly Matters ; and then you may hear their Tongues run. By this you may know what Treasure is in their Hearts, and what is their Element : Some may be slow of Speech, and bashful, and full of Fears and Temptations ; those may be silent for a while : But if they cannot speak of one thing, cannot they speak of another ? Can they neither mourn nor rejoyce ? If they can join with others in telling Stories, can't they joyn in telling *what GOD has done for their Souls !* Psal. lxxvi. 16. Then conclude that there is no good Treasure in their Hearts.

We live in a Day of great Light ; but it is a Day of much Lightness, wherein little of God and heavenly Things is heard from the Mouths of Professors. I do not charge one Denomination of Professors more than another, for it is too manifest among Professors of all Denominations.

(2.) GOD approved of these good Men, in their religious Practice. The Lord hearkened, and heard it. You need not talk of Religion to be heard of Men, or to please them ; GOD himself hearkens and hears, and that's enough. While the Disciples were talking by the Way, Jesus Christ
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drew near, and joyned himself with them, Luke xxiv. 15. O how should we think and speak! For God is near, and he hears us; nor should the Weakest be discouraged, provided they are sincere. Do all you can to promote Piety; for God observes your good Design, under your weak Endeavours.

(3.) God kept an exact Account of what these good Men thought and spake. *A Book of Remembrance was written before him.* This is spoken of God, after the Manner of Men: For it has been the Custom of Kings and Princes to do so, both of the good and evil Deeds of Men. But none must think from hence, that God has any need of such a *Book* to bring to his *Remembrance*, either what good or evil Men have done, or spoken, for it is impossible for God to forget.

The People of God, indeed, are bid to put God in Remembrance, *Isai. xliii. 26. Put me in Remembrance*, saith God, that is, plead my Promises in Faith. Thus God's Fulfilment of his Promise is called, his *Remembrance of his Mercy*, Luke i. 54.

It is Mercy, if God will make a Promise to any of the miserable, unworthy Children of Men; and God's making his Promise good, is his *Remembrance of that Mercy*: For some of God's Promises are so long before they are fulfill'd, that weak Faith is ready to say, Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is his Mercy, his Promise clean gone? So when God punishes his Enemies, it is said, that he remembers them. *Rev. xvi. 19. And great Babylon came in Remembrance, to give unto her the Cup of the Wine of the Fierceness of his Wrath.* *Rev. xviii. 5. For her Sins have reached to Heaven, and GOD hath remembered her Iniquities.*

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Those that have forgotten their Sins, and hope that God has done so too, [if they do not confess and forsake them] will find that God has not forgotten. There is a Cup of Wrath for all impenitent Sinners; and God will surely remember to give it to all his implacable Enemies. So on the other Hand, God's fulfilling his Promises, or shewing any special Favour to his People, is called a Remembrance of them. *Gen. viii. 1. And GOD remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the Cattle that was with him in the Ark.* There is not one of the meanest Creatures forgotten of GOD, *Luke xii. 6.* Much less those that fear him, and serve him. *Isai. xlix. 15, 16. Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee: Behold, I have graven thee upon the Palms of my Hands.* It is said, that the Jews, in Captivity in Babylon, engrav'd the City Jerusalem upon their Rings, that they might remember it daily. To which the Psalmist might refer, when he saith, *If I forget thee, let my right Hand forget her Skill, [in Music.]* Thus we do to remember deceased Friends, engrave their Name, their Age, and the Time of their Death, upon a Ring; then put it on our Hand, to remember them by. So the High-Priest had the Names of the Tribes of Israel on his Breast-plate, when he went into the most holy Place; and so does our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest, now he is enter'd into Heaven. So God remembers his People Day and Night; but he is especially mindful of them, or is said to remember them, when he brings some new Mercy to them, *Psal. cv. 42, 43. He remembered his holy Promise, and Abraham his Ser-*
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want, and brought forth his People with Joy, and his Chosen with Gladness.

Now, let us seriously think with our selves, how we should improve this Declaration.

Does God keep a Book of Remembrance of all the Good that his People have spoken of, or done for him? Then,

[1.] They should keep a Remembrance of what God has spoken to them, or done for them: How he has carry'd them thro' their various Tryals; and what have been their Supports; and what have been the Frames of their Hearts; and what the Fruits and Issue of all their Afflictions; what Good they have gotten by them: This was *Israel's Duty*, to keep a *Book of Remembrance*, of all the Foot-steps of divine Providence towards them in all their Forty Years Journey in the Wilderness, *Deut. viii. 2. Thou shalt remember all the Way which the Lord thy GOD hath led thee these Forty Years, in the Wilderness, to humble thee, and prove thee; and to see what was in thy Heart, whether thou wouldest keep his Commandments or no.*

[2.] It is very needful that we should remember, that the All-seeing Eye of God is upon us, wherever we are, and whatever we are doing. As the Works of Men are all known to God, so are their Words and Thoughts. *Thou GOD seest me, Gen. xvi. 13.* God knows all our vain Thoughts, and idle Words; every Untruth that we speak, every passionate Expression, every Lye, every Oath. O what a strict Watch should we keep over our Words! For all are recorded in God's *Book of Remembrance*. And all shall be called over again, at the great Day, when the *Books shall be opened*.

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[3.] What a long Account will some have to give of all their Oaths, their Cursing and Swearing; their Railing and Lying; their Blasphemy, and Reproaches, and hard Speeches; their frothy, empty, vain Discourses: When this *Book of Remembrance* is opened, Where will the Sinner and Ungodly appear?

[4.] The People of God ought neither to be afraid nor ashamed to speak of, and for God and Religion. Should we be ashamed of that which is pleasing to God, that which is thought worthy to be written in Heaven! We might speak of God, and the Things of God, *before Kings, and not be ashamed*, Psal. cxix. 46. Let them be ashamed that desire the Name of Christians, and have not the Heart, and Spirit, and Speech of Christians.

[5.] True Christians should endeavour so to speak, as to be willing it should be recorded in Heaven. *Job said, O that my Words were now written, that they were printed in a Book*, Job xix. 23.

Have not some Professors reason to say, O that I had never spoken such light vain Words, at such a Time; or such proud, passionate, hasty, unadvised Words, at such a Time! O that I had never so abus'd my Tongue! Were my evil Words written in a Book, I could not answer for one of a Thousand? Were these known to others, sure all good Men would abhor me, as I abhor my self, and repent in Dust and Ashes? O Searcher of Hearts, blot them out of thy Book, through the Merits of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ. And now, touch my Lips with a *live Coal from thine Altar*, and help me to keep my *Mouth as with a Bridle*; and henceforth to use my Tongue as an Instrument

ment for thy Praise and Glory, and the Good of others.

[6.] We may learn hence, who have their Names written in Heaven. They are all those that fear the Lord, and have God in their Hearts and delightful Thoughts, as well as in their Mouths. Not all that talk of God, but those that serve him in Sincerity and Truth : For if their Words and Works are recorded in Heaven, and such as God delights in ; then these are they whose Names also are written in Heaven. What a Matter of Encouragement is here to poor, but sincere Christians, in all their Way and Work !

[7.] Whatever Company we come into, let us be sure to watch our Tongues. When we are alone, we should watch our Thoughts, and watch our Hearts against envious Projects, and evil Devices ; and employ our selves in serious Meditations of divine Things. But when we are in Company, then we should watch our Mouths.

(1.) Against light, vain Words. *Matt. xii. 36. Every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give Account thereof in the Day of Judgment.*

(2.) Against proud, boasting Words. Wise Men can see thro' that false Glass, and they loath it.

(3.) Watch against defaming slandering Words. God has put the Honour of our Neighbour into our Hands, and committed it to our keeping.

(4.) We should watch against flattering Words ; for that is hateful to all good Men. And so it is to God, if any speak with the Tongue, what they never intend with their Heart.

(5.) We should watch against filthy, corrupt, poysonous Words. *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners, 1 Cor. xv. 33.*

(6.) Against

(6.) Against jeering, scoffing, provoking, taunting, contentious Words. These are not the Means to promote Love and Piety, but to imbitter the Spirits of one against another.

What then should we speak of? I answer.

We may speak of any thing that our worldly Business calls for. The Matters concerning our Trades, our Families, our Neighbours, as far as we consult their Good. We may talk of our Affairs both by Sea and Land : But, in all, we must watch against Sin, both in the Matter, and in the Manner of our Speaking. We should neither tell or hear any uncharitable Stories of others ; but, if the Case will bear it, plead for thy Neighbour, who is not present to speak for himself. This is the Way also to preserve our own good Name.

(7.) Do all you can to promote spiritual Discourse, where-ever you come. Christians, it is not enough that you speak no Evil, but it is needful that you set some Godly Discourse on foot. It is not enough for a Christian, that their Speech be profitable ; for that it may be, when it's all of Trade, of Shops, of Fields, and Corn, and Cattle : But there should be something of God, something of Soul, and something of the World to come. Before we leave the Company, we should endeavour to leave some Savour of Religion behind us, that the Company may be the better for us, that when we and they are parted, they may not say of us, How vain and frothy was his Discourse ! Or, what a hot, passionate, censorious Man is he ! Or, on the other hand, how full of merry Stories, Punns, and Jests ! But, rather, what a favory Christian, what a live Coal is he, how does he warm many ! O how much better is he than an heartless Professor, who, like a dead Coal,

will blacken and defile many, but warm none.

Some have said, when they have parted with their Company, What an empty unprofitable Visit have we had or made! I waited for such an one's speaking, and I heartily wish'd that they would have begun; for they were better fitted to have done it than I. I am not able to speak to the Profit of others. To such it may be reply'd, If you cannot do the Work of the Ax, to cut down the Tree, or square the Timber; yet, attempt to do the Work and Office of a Whet-stone, that you may sharpen, whet, prepare, and stir up others, who have sharper Parts, that they may do what, you say, you cannot do; or, at least, cannot do so well as others.

[8.] When you have good Thoughts in your own Mind, or are enter'd into any good Discourse, don't easily break off, or dismiss them. The Fire that comes down from Heaven should be kept alive, and not suffer'd to go out. Keep the Lamp burning; take Care to supply it with fresh Oil, that it may burn steady and constant.

If we wou'd have a Burning-Glass to fire any Thing, we must, not only, take Care to bring it to the exact Phocus, [a certain Distance from the Thing to be fired; for if mov'd higher or lower, it will not take Effect] but we must hold it steady to one Place; if we shift it about from Place to Place it will not do: So we must keep our Thoughts steady upon some useful Subject, till the Heart is warm'd; and when the Fire of Affection burns, we shall be best prepar'd, and most inclin'd to speak with the Tongue, that which may be most profitable to others, *Psal.* xxxix. 3.

Thus I have finish'd what I intended to say from the Text. And now I commit it to the LORD

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of the Harvest, the God of all Grace, with whom
 is the Residue of the Spirit ; who can make his
 Power known, thro' our Weakness ; and his
 Grace, over our Unworthiness ; and bless Pulse
 and Water, to make his Children, like *Daniel*,
 fresh and fair : To him be Glory, through Jesus
 Christ, for ever and ever. *Amen.*





A Means propos'd to prevent vain Thoughts, and a Pattern how to spiritualize all Things that we see and hear. [Which may serve to furnish us with proper Matter to speak of one to another, and prevent much unprofitable Discourse among Christians.] In a View, and serious Consideration of the Heavens, the Earth, and Seas; with various Occurrences of Providence, in abundance of Things that daily offer themselves to our Thoughts, that may lead us to the profitable Contemplation of GOD, and of divine Things.

Of the CREATION in General.

SOME blame the Creation, or the Wisdom of God therein, that there are so many useless, and so many hurtful Creatures, as Spiders, Flies, Hornets, &c. So some Men think, because their Knowledge of the Creatures is so imperfect. But these may be more necessary and beneficial to Mankind than they are aware of; not one of them is made in vain. These

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These are not made directly to punish Man for Sin, but to answer some good End of the Creator. They were all made very good. These are *Parts of the Ways of GOD*, Indications of his Wisdom and Power. When we see, or think of these, we may, rather, humbly think of the Swarms of more hurtful Lusts in our own Hearts, by Nature; and loath our selves on the Account of them.

2. Some complain of the Globe of the Earth, that it is such a rough and irregular Thing. If it be so, yet we must look on it as the Ruins of a demolish'd, but once noble Building. But, such as it is, all the Creatures cannot mend it; and, such as it is, it is too good for those that inhabit it: Too good to be a Tent for sinful Man. But it is easier for Men to find fault with a Piece of curious Work, than to mend it.

The lofty Hills and Mountains afford great Pleasure to the Beholder.

(1.) From one of them may be seen many Leagues at Sea, Ships sailing out and in; twenty distinct Parishes at one View; nay, several Counties at once.

(2.) These afford Feeding for Millions of Sheep, that most useful Creature, for Food and Cloathing for Man.

(3.) In the Bowels of these Hills are contain'd our Iron, Lead, Tin, Brass, and Copper; about which Thousands of Men are continually employ'd.

(4.) Out of the Sides of these issue great Quantities of Water, for watering all the Plains, and for washing the Ore from its Filth; and for driving Mills for Corn and Cloth. So that it is a Piece of Man's Weakness to blame the Creator, that the Globe of the Earth is such a rough and unpolish'd Piece of Work.

O may

O may I rather sit down and admire the Wisdom and Power of him that made it, than quarrel with that which I am not worthy of; and which all the wisest cannot mend. And enquire what Return I should make to this great, good, and gracious Creator, that has so provided for poor unworthy Man; and for me among the rest: And how I should use the World as not abusing it.

3. Who could so have hung the wide Canopy of Heaven? Which, tho' it is a Creature of God, yet is unmeasurable by us. This whole Globe of the Earth is but a little Spot compar'd with it, or as one single Sand compar'd with a Mountain: O, then, what must the Maker thereof be! How beautiful is this Curtain and Canopy of Heaven! How does it shine with heavenly Lights, sending down their Influences upon the Earth! These are all as a Book, wherein we may read our Maker's Perfections: These shew his eternal Power and Godhead: How wise and skilful! Here we may see him that gave them all their Places and Order, and keeps them therein thro' every Age.

4. Which of all the Creatures here below, or what single Part of any one of them could have been better framed, or disposed, to render them more useful either to themselves or to others? Every Creature is fitted to move and act in that Element, where the Wisdom of God has assigned them their Habitation.

5. Or could the Sun, or Moon, or Stars, have been better plac'd for Service to the Earth, or Man upon it, than now they are? Would it have been better, if they had been nearer to the Earth, or farther off?

The Sun is most conveniently plac'd, both to enlighten the Stars above us, and to enliven the Earth.

Earth. If the Sun had been nearer to the Earth, the Earth would have been parch'd up; and if it had been plac'd higher, then the Earth would have wanted its Heat: So that on both Accounts, this Earth would not have been so fit for its Inhabitants, as now it is.

And had the Sun stood still, then one Part of the World had wanted its Influences; and near one half would have been without Inhabitants.

Besides, the Beauty of the Heavens, which now we behold in the Absence of the Sun, would have been hid entirely from us, and Men could not have admir'd that curious Piece of divine Workmanship. Neither would Men and Beasts have had that convenient time for Rest that now they have, by the Absence of the Sun.

But now, by its daily and yearly Course in the Heavens, every Part of the Earth partakes of its needful Influences. *Nothing is hid from the Heat thereof*, Psal. xix. 6.

O may I have Help from Heaven, to see and admire the Wisdom, the Power, and Goodness of the Creator, by the Creatures. May Earth lead me to Heaven, and the visible heavenly Bodies lead me to the invisible God, *Rom. i. 20. For the invisible Things of him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

Of the SUN.

1. **T**HIS is the Fountain of Light: The Moon and Stars borrow their Light from the Sun. Thus it fitly, tho' faintly, resembles Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness; who is the Fountain of

of all Light, natural, spiritual, and eternal. *He lighteth every one that cometh into the World,* John i. 9. Either,

(1.) With the Light of Reason, whereby Mankind are distinguish'd from brute Creatures.

(2.) Or with the Light of Learning in the Knowledge of Nature, and the Improvements of it.

(3.) Or with the Light of divine Revelation. *Holy Men of GOD spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ.*

(4.) Or with the Light of saving Understanding, sanctified Knowledge of our selves, that may humble us; or the Knowledge of GOD in Christ, which is *eternal Life*, John xvii. 2.

(5.) Or the Light of spiritual Comfort. *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you,* John xiv. 27.

But though the Sun is a fit Emblem of Jesus Christ, yet the Sun is but a Creature; and a Creature which Jesus Christ himself made. O how glorious then must the Lord Jesus Christ himself be! The glorious Angels of Heaven, as so many Stars, borrow their Light of Glory from Christ their Sun.

2. The Sun resembles Jesus Christ, as there is but one Sun, one Fountain of Light; though there are thousands of other useful Lights, yet these cannot answer the Absence of the Sun: So, though there is a useful Moon [the Earth] and there are so many useful Stars [Ministers] in the Churches, and though there are thousands of Children of Light, like so many Stars moving regularly in their Orbs, and are very useful, yet these put all together, will not answer the Absence of the Sun of Righteousness to a Soul that has once seen him in his Beauty.

3. What a comfortable Sight is it, to behold the Sun, when it breaks through a dark Cloud, by which it had been for a great while hid ! So is the Sight of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, when he will shine, with Healing in his Wings, after the Soul had seen neither Sun or Stars for many Days.

4. It is one of the Wonders of Nature, that though the Sun shines, seemingly, so unequally upon the World ; making the Days longer or shorter in one Part of the World than in another, yet in the compass of a whole Year, one Nation has not one Hour of the Light of the Sun more than another ; but some have more of its Heat than others ; and so have some under the Shining of the Gospel-Light, more heavenly Warmth than others. Some have *the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of GOD in the Face of Jesus Christ*.

5. How wonderful is the Sun, in its swift Motion round the Earth, at such a vast Distance from us, in twenty four Hours ! And the Wonder is the greater, when it is supposed to be one hundred sixty six Times bigger than the whole Globe of the Earth.

6. Was this great and glorious Body made to serve poor Man ; and continued to serve sinful Man ! O how much is the Goodness of the Creator to be admired ! *Lord, what is Man, that thou art thus mindful of him.* But, O wonderful Goodness ! that he who made this glorious useful Creature, himself came *in the Form of a Servant*, to do for poor fallen Man, what all the Creatures put together could never have done.

7. When the Sun returns after a long dark Night, it makes many joyful at the Return of the Day ;
for

for Darkneſs is uncomfortable, and Light very deſirable. But many are glad to ſee the Light, that make little good uſe of it: So ſome ſeem to be pleas'd with the Light of the Goſpel, that do not work while it is Day. It's a juſt Matter of Grief, to think how many idle away their precious Time in Dreſſing and Undreſſing, in uſeleſs Diſcourſe, in unprofitable Viſits and Diversions; as if God had ſet up this glorious Light for Children, and unwiſe Men and Women to play and trifle by.

8. By this glorious Sun of Heaven, we may alſo ſee what Honour and Glory God deſigns for all his faithful Servants; for God has ſaid, *the Righteous ſhall ſhine as the Sun in the Firmament.* Should not all the Children of God be concern'd now to ſhine as Lights in this World?

9. The Sun is alſo an Emblem of the ſpotleſs Righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, with which the Church of Chriſt (conſiſting of true Believers) is adorned. The Moon has many Spots, as alſo our own Righteouſneſſes have; but Chriſt's Righteouſneſs is without Spot; and ſo ſhall the Church of Chriſt be, by that Time the great Author of Grace has finiſhed his Work upon it. Jeſus Chriſt will *preſent it to his Father without Spot*, Eph. v. 27.

Of the MOON.

1. **T**HE Moon borrows its Light from the Sun, and thus reflects it back upon the Earth: So ſhould all Miniſters and Chriſtians do with the Light of any Kind, borrow'd from Jeſus Chriſt, they ſhould ſhine with it upon others. They, like the Moon, are but dark Bodies of themſelves,

but having received useful Light from the Sun, Jesus Christ, they should shine as Lights to others.

2. The Moon, how changeable is its Face! It never shews the same Face two Days together, and so it is a very fit Emblem of this Earth, with all Things therein. What Care should we take to keep it under our Feet? *Rev. xii. 1.* Not to set our Affections upon it, for it is always changing.

3. We can much more easily stand and look stedfastly on the Moon, than we can look on the Sun. And so we can easier keep our Thoughts stedfast on earthly Things, than on heavenly Things. Things below are easier seen and known than heavenly Things are. Earthly Things are more familiar to us: The Brightness of the Sun is too great for our visive Faculty to behold long together; and Heaven's Glory, and the Glory of Jesus Christ, and of Saints and Angels, is too great for us, till we have a spiritual Eye, and then with Pleasure we shall see Jesus Christ as he is, *1 John iii. 2.*

4. The Moon is much nearer to us, than any other Lights of Heaven. So it is, to us, the more like this Earth; and heavenly Things, like the Sun, are farther off; and so the Generality of Men put them farther off from their Thoughts.

5. The Moon, tho' it is called in Scripture one of the greater Lights, yet it is said to be the least of them all: Tho' one single Star seems so small, yet it is supposed, that some one of them is one hundred Times bigger than the whole Earth; but the Moon to be thirty nine Times less than the Earth. This may teach us, not always to judge of Things according to the outward Appearance, as

Men are too ready to do ; and so take up with a little changeable Moon, that is, with earthly Things : there are higher and better Things that deserve our Affection, *Col. iii. 2.*

6. The Moon, at the Full, is farthest from the Sun, and at that Time is in greatest Danger of an Eclipse, by the Interposition of the Earth : So the Person that is at the Full, in Possession of earthly Things, is in great Danger of being farther from God, and from the Fullness of Christ and the Covenant, and from an Exercise of Faith, in a Life of Dependance on the Sun of Righteousness, and so live a Life of Sense, *1 Tim. 6. 17.*

7. At the Change, or new Moon, it hath no Light, therefore can give none to us ; yet even then it is nearest the Sun ; so may the poor humble Soul be, that *walketh in Darknes, and hath no Light* ; he may be nearer to Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, by humble Dependance, *trusting in the Name of the Lord, and staying himself upon his GOD*, *Isai. 1. 10.*

8. When the Moon is brightest, it hath many Spots in it : So it is a fit Emblem of the Sanctification of the People of God, *Cant. vi. 10. Who is she that looketh forth as the Morning, fair as the Moon* ? Their Light, and Grace, and Holiness, are but like the Morning Light ; not yet come to their Meridian Brightness. Sanctification shall grow and increase to a perfect Day, but at present, Sanctification, like the Moon, hath some Spots in it.

Of the STARS.

THese are wonderful on many Accounts.

1. For their Number. It's wonderful that God should set up so many Millions of Lights for Man's Use !

Use! Who knows the Number of them? God knows them, and calls them all by their Names. I think no Man pretends to name any more than about thirteen Hundred of the biggest of them; but how many Millions are there more, for which Men have no particular Names; and indeed, have no Knowledge of? Then this God must needs know all our Hearts and Thoughts.

2. These are wonderful, as to their Magnitude; what great Bodies are they, some of them are said to be one hundred Times bigger than all this Earth, and Sea together.

3. These are said to be of six Magnitudes: So it is with the Stars in the Churches, (the Ministers of the Gospel) some are less and some are greater Lights; that is, some have greater and some meaner Parts and Gifts. The Spirit of God divideth to every one severally as he will, 1 Cor. xii. 11. Some are dimmer Stars, and some are *burning and shining Lights*, John v. 35. And thus also do they put us in Mind of the differing Degrees of Glory that God has assigned to all his faithful Servants: *One Star shall differ from another Star in Glory*, 1 Cor. xv. 41. But all shall shine as the *Stars for ever and ever*, Dan. xii. 3.

4. These also have their Light from the Sun; and so have the Stars of the Churches theirs from Christ. They are in Christ's Right-hand, and they shine with borrow'd Light. Christ the *bright and Morning Star* (as he calls himself, Rev. xxii. 16.) enlightens them all; and his Hand sets them in the Orb and Sphere, where they are to move, and give Light to others.

5. The Order also of the Stars is wonderful; they all move by Rule. These are the Hosts, or

the Armies of Heaven ; and like a well-disciplin'd Army, under the Conduct of a wise General, they keep their Ranks, and so have done from the Creation of the World. Those that are well skill'd in the Motion of the Stars, know where to expect any one of them for many Years to come. They never interfere, never jar. O that all the Stars in the Churches were like those in the Heavens, to keep their Ranks and Order, and never jar or differ one with the other.

6. These are wonderful, as to their swift Motion ; whirling round the Globe of the Earth, at such a vast Distance, as makes a Circle of a most amazing Bigness ; yet do they daily perform their Course ; never one Minute over or under their fixed Time. How many thousand Miles must they run in one Hour ! O how wonderful are thy Works, O Lord, how glorious thy Wisdom, how unsearchable thy Power ! How soon can thy Help come to the Needy ! And whither, O whither shall the Sinner flee from thy Presence, *Psal. cxxxix.*

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7. If all these glorious Lights, these great heavenly Bodies, were made for the Use and Service of Man, we may see how kind the Great Creator is to his Creature Man. And also how disingenuous and ungrateful Man is, that can sin against so much Goodness. Nay, what a foolish inconsiderate Creature poor fallen Man is, that dares to fight and rebel against so great and glorious a Lord, the Lord of Hosts.

8. If the visible Curtain of Heaven is so beautiful, containing so many Millions of great Lights ; what Glory must be within ! If the outer Court is so glorious, what must the *Holy of Holies* be !

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There is the *Throne of GOD, and the Lamb*. And how glorious must the Maker of all these be !

Thus we should use the Stars, as Means to lead us to God and our Duty ; and not abuse them as some do, by enquiring of the Stars about Futurities ; what Crosses shall befall our selves or others. Enquire what is thy State ; ask thy self, How have I lived ? What is my present Duty ? And endeavour to be faithful in the Discharge of it ; and leave future Events to God, who orders all Things according to the Counsel of his Will. Be more concerned to live in the Fear of God, and to glorify him, by an holy obedient Life ; and then trust thy Body, and thy Relations, and thy Cattle, and all thy Concerns in the Hands of God. The Stars shall never fight against any but those that fight against God. Look to it that thou art in the Way of God, and that Way will be sure to end well. *Isa. iii. 10. Say ye to the Righteous, it shall be well with him.* One that pretended to have skill, in calculating of Nativities, told a certain Christian, *that the Stars ruling at his Birth, did not much favour him ; you are like to meet with very great Crosses.* The Christian answer'd him, I am not concerned so much about hereafter, as to know and do my present Duty. If I am to meet with Troubles, I hope they will be for my Good. But, Sir, said he, did you calculate my First or my Second Birth ? For I have been born again. Therefore I am sure the Stars will not hurt me, they cannot hurt me ; for *if GOD be for us, who can be against us ? Rom. viii. 31.*

Of the Eclipse of the SUN and MOON.

1. **H**OW many Thousand stand and wonder at these ; because an Eclipse comes but seldom. Why do not Men stand and wonder at the Rising or Setting of the Sun or Moon ? But we have done wondering at these, because this comes every Day ; and yet it is not a greater Wonder to see a Part of the Sun or Moon, than it is to see the whole Body of them shining in their Strength. It is not a greater Wonder in it self, to see it dark, than it is to see it light ; but how taken are we with new and uncommon Things ? There is more looking on a Monster, than upon a perfect Creature. But is it more wonderful to see the Defect of any Thing, than to see it in its Perfection ! But thus we do ; because we are, like the *Athenians* of old, for *seeing* as well as *hearing* some new Thing.

2. It is the Moon that comes between the Sun and us, that makes the Eclipse of the Sun, or hinders our seeing of the Sun. So it is the Earth, too much in our Eye, and Heart, that sometimes hinders our Sight of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness ; Things of this World sometimes occasion an Eclipse to the Soul of divine Things.

3. We should be admonish'd by the Signs in the Heavens, but the People of God should not be terrify'd or dismay'd at them.

Do these Signs in the Heavens warn or threaten some Body ? These are the Rod of God, shaken against his Enemies ; nevertheless, ingenious Children should, in them, reverence the Hand of their Father.

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4. How very differing have been the Effects of the Sign of the Heavens, upon differing Persons: Some have been affrighted to Death, some affrighted out of their Senses, and some from their Sins: It having pleas'd God to bless the Providence, to beget in them a serious Concern for the Salvation of their Souls. So have the Effects of the Preaching of the Gospel been, to one *a Saviour of Life unto Life*; and to another, *a Saviour of Death unto Death*: Some believe to the saving of their Souls, and others believe not.

If a saving Change is wrought on the Soul, how much is sovereign Grace to be admir'd by the Receiver; let the Work be wrought by what Means it will? God, the great Worker, must have *all the Glory*. *Not unto us, LORD, not unto us, but to thy Name be all the Glory*, Psal. cxv. 1.

Of the WINDS and the AIR.

HOW strange a Creature is it! It is invifible [it cannot be feen] but we fee its mighty Effects, and we *hear the Sound thereof*. Its Power is inexpressible: *So is every one that is born of the Spirit*, John iii. 8. Such is the Power of the Spirit upon the Soul of every one that is born from above.

This Creature, the Wind and Air, is of most excellent Use in Nature.

1. By this we are kept alive, this is what we breathe in: We presently expire without it. Nothing can supply its Place for preserving of Life.

2. By this useful Creature, we communicate our Thoughts one to another in Words: This also is the

the Means of the sweetest and most delightful Sounds, and all the Harmony of Music.

3. This is of excellent Use to cleanse the Earth, thro' its Agitation, from hurtful Vapours and Infection ; and also to allay excessive Heat.

4. This is necessary for carrying Ships from Place to Place, and for carrying on many other very useful Trades.

5. It is also very useful to keep the Seas in Motion, to preserve them from corrupting. These are at God's Disposal, he keeps them in his Treasure ; and when he will, he brings them forth for his Work : For, the *storming Winds fulfil his Will.*

6. These also are one of the best Emblems that Nature affords, to set forth the Being and Omnipresence of God.

(1.) The Being of God, who is invisible. God is a *Spirit*, and the Wind bears the same Name in Scripture ; for though we feel that the Wind is a Body, yet it is invisible to us. This may teach us to believe what we never saw, *John iii. 12. If I have told you of earthly Things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly Things ?*

(2.) The Wind and Air are a lively Representation of the Omnipresence of God. The Air is present every where, fills all Things, the Pores of all Bodies ; and it is in the very Bowels of the Earth ; and also fills the great Space between Heaven and Earth : So God is present every where, in every Thing ; he can be excluded out of no Place. [But especially present with his own People, to hear them, to save them, to assist and uphold them.]

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But herein is a vast Difference between the Creator and his Creature : God is not bound to any one Place, as the Air is, for if the Air fills one Place, the same Air cannot be in another at the same Time ; but God fills Heaven and Earth, not by changing Places, as the Air does, and as all other Bodies must do ; as the Sun, Moon, and Stars, they remove from one Point of the Heavens to another : So the Air that blows in one Place, cannot be in another at the same Time. Or as a King, who, though his Authority is extended to the uttermost Bounds of his Dominions, yet he himself is confin'd to one City, one House, or one Room of a House ; for he cannot be in two at one Time. But God is every where at once : The Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him, and this Earth is but his Foot-stool.

[1.] Then God can be, yea, he will be with his People every where ; for he has promis'd it. *Isai. xli. 10. Fear not, for I am [I will be] with thee. I will not fail thee or forsake thee.*

[2.] Then also God can hear their Prayers, at whatsoever Time, or in whatsoever Place offer'd up to him, *in the Name of Jesus Christ.*

[3.] Then Sinners should be afraid of sinning against God, because God is *every where beholding the Evil and the Good.*

Thoughts on the CLOUDS.

1. **I**T is wonderful how they cover the whole Heavens, in a very little Space of Time. This is spoken of in Scripture, as one of the wonderful Works of God. *Psal. cxlvii. 8. He covereth the Heavens with Clouds.* With these, as with a Curtain,

tain, he hides his curious Works in the Heavens from our Sight for a while. [So he may hide himself from the Sight of his People for a while, *Clouds and Darknes are round about him.*] The Clouds of Heaven may be a Mercy to the Earth, in preventing too much scorching Heat of the Sun. So the Clouds are called *the Hand of GOD*, as if he laid his Hand on the Earth, and on the Creatures, to defend them with the Hollow of his Hand.

2. It is wonderful how these Clouds carry so many thousand Tuns of Water, *upon the Wings of the Wind*; like a great Sea hanging in the Air, *and the Clouds are not rent under them*, Job xxvi.

8. *Knowest thou the Ballancing of the Clouds?* Job xxxvii. 16. This is done by the same steady Hand that gives Bounds to the raging Waves of the Sea.

It is no wonder that great Quantities of Water are kept in Cisterns of Stone or Lead; but it is very wonderful, that such a vast Quantity of Water is kept in a thin Cloud, and that while it is to's'd hither and thither by furious Winds: This is one of the Wonders of Nature. *O LORD, how wonderful are thy Works, in Wisdom hast thou made them all.*

3. It is wonderful how such a great Body of Water, so heavy an Element, is first taken and carried up into the Air, and then again distils in fine gentle Rain upon the Earth, to make it fruitful: It is wonderful that it does not descend in a great Body, and overflow whole Towns, and carry all before it.

When we look on the Clouds, we may call to mind many useful Scriptures and Providences of GOD, towards his People.

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(1.) It may put us in Mind of the Providence of God towards the whole Body of *Israel*; with a Cloud he brought them out of *Egypt*, *Psal.* lxxviii. 14. *In the Day time he led them with a Cloud, and all the Night with a Light of Fire.* God does the same for his People in every Age, upon a spiritual Account. The People of God are brought out of worse than *Egyptian* Bondage, and God guides them with the Cloud of his Providence; though sometimes they have the dark Side, and sometimes the bright Side: But, be that as it will, the Church and People of God shall be defended. *Isai.* iv. 5. *The LORD will create upon every dwelling Place of Mount Zion, and upon her Assemblies, a Cloud and Smoke by Day, and the shining of a flaming Fire by Night: For upon all the Glory shall be a Defence.*

(2.) In a Cloud the Lord Jesus Christ pass'd into Heaven: *Acts* i. 9. *A Cloud received him out of their Sight.* And so he shall come again in the Clouds, with Power and great Glory, *Rev.* i. 7. *Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see him.* And then upon a Throne [as a white Cloud] he shall judge the World, *Rev.* xiv. 14.

(3.) The Clouds may remind us, that all the Godly shall be caught up together in the Clouds, to meet the LORD in the Air, *1 Theff.* iv. 17. And so they shall be ever with the LORD.

(4.) These may put us in mind of God's abundant Grace, in pardoning Sin. *Isai.* xlv. 22. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy Transgressions as a thick Cloud, and will not remember thy Sins.*

(5.) We may learn some spiritual Lesson by the darkest and most cloudy Day.

[1.] That

[1.] That it is Day, and not Night, tho' we cannot see the Sun ; so it may be with the Soul, tho' it cannot get a Sight of the Sun of Righteousness.

[2.] We ought not to say in a cloudy Day, *I shall see the Sun no more* : For God can quickly scatter the Clouds, and bring Light, and Peace, and Comfort into troubled Souls. *Post Nubes Sol.*

[3.] When it is a clear Day, we must not think that it will hold so always ; and say with *David*, *My Mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved.* [I shall never be in Darkness again] For he quickly saw his Mistake, *Psal. xxx. 7. Thou hidest thy Face, and I was troubled.*

[4.] If the Clouds promise much Rain, but give none ; these are like the Promises of Men : I must look more to God than to the Clouds ; to God's Promises and Covenant, upon Christ and his Fulness. If the Clouds fail me, God, in Christ, will never fail or forsake me. If the Streams fail, and are cut off, the Fountain will not fail. If the Barrel of Meal, and the Cruise of Oyl are almost done, then wait for a fresh Supply from Heaven ; for if the Cistern be almost empty, the Fountain is full still.

Of the S E A S.

THE Sea is very wonderful on many Accounts.
1. On the Account of its Greatness. Some have, with Weakness enough, found fault with it, on this Account, that it is so wide and so deep. But there's need of it.

(1.) Because

(1.) Because it is the Fountain, from whence all the Rivers must be supply'd with convenient Store of Water, through every Age, for the Use of Man and Beast.

(2.) This is the great Store-house, whence all the Globe of the Earth, which is so vastly large, must be watered, from the Beginning to the End of the Year ; and from Generation to Generation. This the Sea performs two Ways ;

[1.] By plentiful Rains, which the Clouds receive from the Seas ; without which the Earth would be a barren Wilderness. How wide then must the Cistern of the Sea be, to water the whole Earth as long as the World endures ! Herein is to be observ'd one of the Wonders of Nature, that the Water which is so very salt when in the Sea, leaves its Saltness behind it, and is rain'd down fresh for the Service of the Earth, to make it fruitful.

[2.] The Sea waters the Earth, by Thousands of Channels or Veins running thro' the Body of the Earth, which continually supply our Wells with Water : One of the most useful Creatures of God ; and by which the Wisdom of God has thought good to set forth his sanctifying and saving Work of Grace on the Soul.

2. The Sea is wonderful, on the Account of its raging and rolling about with the furious Winds. This is necessary,

[1.] To purge the Waters, and keep them from Putrefaction ; without which they would quickly corrupt, and become unserviceable to Man ; and would not keep alive its own native Inhabitants.

[2.] It may be so raging, at certain Seasons, for the Correction of sinful Man ; who, tho' they see, and might profitably consider, *the Wonders of*

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GOD in the Deep, yet are commonly some of the vilest of Men: For which reason, one of their Commanders has fitly term'd them, not Sea-Men, but Sea-Monsters, their Wickedness being so great.

3. The Sea is wonderful for the Position of its Waters, which is so contriv'd, that tho' in some Places they stand up on a Heap, higher than the Land, [else the Waters, together with the Land, would not make one entire Globe] yet the Waters do not overflow the Earth. It is wonderful that the Sands should be set for Bounds to the raging Seas; but it is God himself, more than the Sands, that keeps them in their Bounds. He saith to the proud Waves, *Hitherto shall ye go, and no further*, Job xxxviii. 11. So can God make *the Wrath of Man to praise him, and the Remainder of their Wrath he can restrain*, Psal. lxxvi. 10.

4. The Sea is wonderful as to its Tides. That the Waters should run downwards to the Sea is no Wonder; but that the same River, by and by, shall change its Course and run upwards; this is very strange! But so it is by the Ordinance of Heaven.

[1.] To make the Mariners Work much the easier, the Winds also having the same Use, that Men may not tugg and toil at the Oars, as otherwise they must be forc'd to do.

[2.] This is so order'd, by wise and kind Providence, to invite and encourage Men of one Nation, and one Town, to trade with another; which would be very difficult, if at all possible, without it: And the Tides keep their exact Time, and stay for no Man; otherwise the Tide would not be half so serviceable as now it is. If we did not know certainly at what Hour the Tide would re-

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turn, what Waiting, and what Uncertainty would it occasion? And consequently, greatly hinder our necessary Business, which can now be dispatch'd with much more Ease. — I have my Ebbing and Flowing, my high and low Water. When the Water of my Enjoyments is at the lowest, the Return of the Tide may be the nearer. O may my spiritual Trade go on, that I may slip no Tide, wherein I may not send something to, or receive something from Heaven.

5. The Sea is wonderful, on Account of the Salt-ness of its Water. What is the natural Cause of it! Some have assign'd one Reason, some another; but this may be put among the [*Arcana Dei*] Secrets of God. But thus it is, to preserve it from Putrefaction, for the Good of Man, and of its native Inhabitants. Concerning whom, we may here take Notice of another Wonder in Nature; and that is, That in this very salt Water, [even as salt as Brine] the Fish that are in it all their Life, come out as fresh as those that liv'd in fresh Water. — These are like some poor Professors that live under the Gospel all their Days, yet live and die without the Grace of God, and have neither Heart nor Speech season'd with it.

6. The Seas are wonderful for their Inhabitants.

[1.] For their Numbers, *Psal. civ. 24, 25. O Lord, how wonderful are thy Works! In Wisdom hast thou made them all. The Earth is full of thy Riches, so is this great and wide Sea, wherein are Things creeping innumerable, both small and great.* It is questionable, whether the Sands on the Sea-shore are more than they. O what a great Family has the great Lord of Heaven, and Earth, and Seas, to keep! He preserveth Men and Beasts of the Earth, and all the Fishes of the

Sea. *These all wait on him for their daily Food,* Psal. civ. 2. — Then, should a Child of God fear that he shall want! That God will shut him out of his Providence! Does God take the daily Care of those that Man takes no Care of? Will he not much more feed you, *O ye of little Faith!* Psal. xxxiv. 9. *They that fear the Lord shall want no good Thing.*

[2.] The Inhabitants of the Sea are wonderful, for their great Variety: Some resembling almost every Creature upon the Land, besides the Multitude of others that don't. Yet all keeping their several Kinds distinct, tho' they live in common, and have but one House.

[3.] Some of them wonderful for their Magnitude. There are some so great, that the Elephant, which is the largest of all Creatures by Land, is but a very little Thing, compar'd with one of them.

And yet the Wisdom and Power of God are altogether as manifest in a smaller Creature, as they are in the great Whale, which none can behold without Wonder, and some Dread and Horror, when they approach it. Men wonder at the Largeness of the Mouth, Eyes, and Bones of a Whale, and some other large Creatures in the Sea; but it is altogether as wonderful, closely to consider the curious Frame of one little Mite, whose whole Body is but just visible to us. O then, how exquisite fine must its Eye be! And how wonderful fine their Cords that move the Eyes! And how fine the Veins that may be suppos'd to carry the needful Juices about the little Body! How fine the Muscles that serve to give Motion to its several Members! And how exquisite fine its Intestines! If its whole Body is no bigger than the Point of

a Needle, how fine are its several Parts ! If we look on the Point of a Needle, through a Microscope, it appears as blunt, ragged, and unpolish'd, as an Iron Bar ; but the better the Glas is, through which we view the Works of God, the more fine and curious do they appear : And so does this little Creature, with many others that escape our Notice, without such a Help. And then, O how wonderful is the Being, the Wisdom and the Power of a Spirit [that has no Body at all] as an Angel, or the Soul of Man ! What is my own Soul, that can live without the Body, which it now moves and acts ; that can praise God in Heaven, without an Heart or Tongue !

[4.] It is wonderful how these live ! I do not mean, how, or where they get their Food, for [that's *Piscium Vita*] they live one upon another ; the Greater eat up the Less. But the Wonder is, that there they seem to live without breathing ; or else they live quite another way than Creatures do by Land. The Water, in great Measure, serves them for the same Purposes, with the Air to other Creatures.

[5.] It is wonderful how they can ascend or descend, lie still, or dart themselves hither and thither at their Pleasure. And no less a Wonder, that they should live in so cold an Element. But the God of Nature has so temper'd their Body, Blood, and Spirits, that they live, nay, many of them choose to live in the most Northern (which are the coldest) Seas. O how wonderful is the Wisdom of God ! *These are Parts of his Ways ; but how little a Portion is known of him ?* — Is the Providence of God so extensive, yea, more extensive than the wide Seas ! Then, shall I distrust the Providence of God ! Who cares Day and

Night for all the Inhabitants of the Seas, that are not cared for by Man? None of them want their daily Food, and none of them are taken in the Net, without the Providence of God. — The Apostles toiled *all Night and caught nothing*, so may other Ministers do; but when the Lord pleases, they shall inclose many in the Gospel-Net, *Luke v. 5, 6.*

Of the GLOBE of the EARTH.

(1.) **I**T is wonderful that this great Body of Earth and Water together, being in Circumference [by common Computation] twenty five thousand thirty six Miles, should hang in the Air, from Generation to Generation, upon nothing. But there it was plac'd by *the Word of his Power* that made it, and there it has hung many thousand Years. God that gave it its Station, *taketh up the Islands as a very little Thing*, and he *measures the Waters of the* [great wide] *Seas, as in the Hollow of his Hands: He weighs the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Ballance.* What a wonderful Weight of Earth and Water is here, supported by the Word or Power of God, from Generation to Generation! Yet *the everlasting GOD fainteth not, neither is weary* — This is he that has bid me *cast my Burthen upon him*, and has *promised to sustain me*, *Psal. lv. 22.*

(2.) It is wonderful that Men walk all round this Globe, still with their Feet towards the Centre. Some with their Feet towards our Sides, and some with the Soles of their Feet towards the Soles of our Feet: Yet those Inhabitants of the Earth, that are directly under us, have their Heads toward Heaven as we have; but they see another Part
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of Heaven which we never saw, and other Stars^o which we never had the Sight of: And the Heavens are upwards, and above their Heads, as here with us.

But how wonderful is it, that God knows the Thoughts of every one of those that inhabit the several Parts of the Earth; whatsoever Nation they are in, and all the Words that Men speak, whatever their Language is.

(3.) It is wonderful that in this Globe, which is made up of Earth and Water, the Water should not overflow the Land; tho' in some Places the Water must lie higher than the Land: But God has set its Bounds. He hath said to the proud Waves, *Hitherto shall ye come and no further; here shall thy proud Waves be staid*, Job xxxviii. 11. Shall I be afraid then, that the Waves and Billows of great Afflictions shall overflow me? Or that this Ship [my Soul] though toss'd with Tempests, shall be over-set? O my Soul, speak not in haste, but remember who is the Pilot; it is he that can say to the Winds and Seas, *Peace, be still*, Mat. viii. 26. *and can make a great Calm*. Lord, Increase our Faith, help our Unbelief; was this Faith stronger, we should continue to say, *Lord, save us*; but we should not so often say, *We perish*.

(4.) If this Globe of the Earth turns about its own Axis, as some think, even then its Motion is almost incredible; for then it must march round, with all its Inhabitants upon it, at the Rate of above one thousand forty three Miles every Hour: Or if the Earth stands still, as others think, and is most conformable to Scripture-Expression, then it yet seems a greater Wonder, that the Sun should run such a Course, being at so great a Distance from the Earth. In what an amazing Circle must

it, as a strong Man, run its Race every Day ! But be it as it will, one is just as easy as the other for God to do : One Thing is harder or easier for Man to do, but not so for God. He who supports this whole Globe, is able to maintain his Work of Grace in the Hearts of his People, against all Opposition.—Henceforth may I remember, that that which is impossible with Men, is possible with God. Shall I question the Goodness, or the Care of God, any more than his Power, for these are all infinite, and without Bounds and Measure.

(5.) It is wonderful to consider the great Multitude, and pleasing Variety of Creatures, big and small, that people this Globe of the Earth. Had there been but one or two of each Kind, or but one in all, how much would the Wisdom and Power of God have appear'd in the Creation of it ! How much more now, in the Millions of Creatures that are upon the Earth ! Any one of which, as 'tis a living Creature, and can move at its Pleasure, and provide for its Life and Safety, is more to be admired, than any curious Piece of Work ever perform'd by Man. He that has been the Inventer and Author of thousands of differing, and yet very useful Engines and Arts, is more to be admir'd than he that has invented but one.

(6.) What wonderful Wisdom of God appears in every earthly Thing that we can turn our Eyes, or Thoughts unto.

[1.] If we look to a Flock of a thousand Sheep, there we see,

(1.) How Nature, or rather the God of Nature, has provided Cloathing for them against the Cold : And it is observ'd, that the colder the Climate is, the longer and thicker the Covering is for all the Creatures : But especially the Covering of the Sheep

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is design'd for the After-covering of Man, when the warm Weather will suffer the poor Sheep to be stripp'd of it.——Why should I be proud of my Clothing? It is but a cast off Garment, the Sheep had worn it a whole Year before it was mine.——I am naked in my Soul, without the Covering that I borrow from Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God: It was first his, and then mine by his free Gift.

(2.) That every Sheep knows its own Lamb, and every Lamb knows its own Dam, though mixt among a Thousand.——So Jesus Christ knows his Sheep and Lambs, and they know him. *I know my Sheep, and am known of mine, John x. 14.*

(3.) The Lambs in the Flock seek their Milk upon their bended Knees; they greedily suck, that they may be satisfy'd. So new born Babes [whom the Spirit of God calls Lambs, *John xxi. 15.*] *desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2.* By Prayer, they ask, and seek, and knock, and express their Desire of spiritual Food, by careful Attendance on Gospel-Ordinances; by Faith they suck the Breasts of Consolation that they may be satisfy'd.

(4.) That the Sheep, tho' naturally fearful, is more careful to defend its Young, than it is thoughtful of its own Safety. An Emblem of the Love, Tendernefs, and Care of Jesus Christ towards his People. When he came to seek and save that which was lost, he was more concern'd for the Safety of his People, than for himself. *If ye seek me, let these go their Way.*

(5.) When they die, they are our Food, as while they live they yield us Cloathing. I have my spiritual Food from Christ, but had he not been the Lamb of God slain, he had been no Food for me.

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He dy'd that I might live, and I must starve without him.

(6.) Few Sheep but die a violent Death. Many Thousands of Christ's spiritual Sheep have done so, and many more are *counted as Sheep for the Slaughter*. Jesus Christ, *the Lamb of GOD*, was brought as *a Lamb to the Slaughter*; and as Sheep die without Noise, so Jesus Christ *opened not his Mouth*, in complaining against God, in, and under his Sufferings, *Isai. liii. 7.*

[2.] If we look among the Fowls, those that are design'd to have their chief Abode in the Water, have a Pair of Oars in their Feet, to help them to swim. And those Water-Fowls that had been hatch'd under a Hen, will, without Example, run to the Water, and there they take their Pleasure, tho' the Nurse would fain call them off. So do Children learn to sin, swear, lie, and steal, tho' they have no Example from their Parents. *Cain* had no Example for murdering his Brother.

If we look into the Fields, we see the Birds taught of God, to make their Houses in the same Form, and of the same Matter, which those of the same Kind had done, from Generation to Generation, tho' they never saw one made before: So that many Children can tell what kind of Bird the House, or Nest belongs to, even by the Matter of which 'tis compos'd, for they never vary it, *Job xii. 7.*

And the Wisdom of God has so order'd it, that those Creatures who are to save themselves by Flight, do not carry their Young in their Bodies, as Beasts of the Earth do: for that would expose them more to Danger from Birds of Prey, and so bring the whole Family to Ruin at once. Doth God take care for these? Will he not much more take care of his People? *Luke xii. 24.*

[3.] If

[3.] If we look to the Bees, and see how curiously they frame their Cells, in such Manner that no Room is lost, and as may be strongest for the great Weight they are to put and keep in them.

(1.) Here's an Example of Diligence for me, both in my Business, in the Matters of this World, and in the Affairs of my Soul. They *work while it is Day*, so should I with all my Might; *for the Night cometh wherein no Man can work*. Go to the Bee, thou Sluggard, and learn of him.

(2.) They lay up for the Time to come; and I should lay up Treasure in Heaven, that I may be rich towards God.

(3.) Their curious Body digests the Juice they suck into Honey: O that I could spiritualize every Thing, every Enjoyment, every Providence, and get some spiritual Sweetness out of it, for my own and others Use.

(4.) They are careful to pick off any Defilement from each other. I should be careful of the Name and Credit of others, and not raise an ill Report of another, or spread what others have raised.

(5.) Some of them gather Honey, others gather Wax. Every Christian should do something toward the Building of the spiritual House of God.

[4.] If we consider our selves, we may behold in all Things the wonderful Wisdom of God.

1. The poor Infant is taught of God, to search after the Breast, even as soon as it is born, though it never saw the Breast nor tasted of the Milk. *New-born Babes desire the Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby*, but this Desire is not without a Taste.

2. These Bodies of ours keep the same Form, the same Number of Members, Bones, Veins and Arteries,

ries, without any Variation, from one Generation to another : So it is ordered by divine Wisdom, or else, why has it not taken some differing Form before now ?

3. The several Parts of our Body, that are more tender, are most strongly defended ; this could not be by Chance, but by the Wisdom of God.

(1.) The Heart is defended by the two Arms, then by the strong Ribs, with other Means of Defence.

(2.) The Brain (the Fountain of Life, Spirits, Sense and Motion) is defended by the Scull, then by two very tough Skins, besides the outward Skin, and Hair, and Flesh.

These, with a thousand other Occurrences, invite us to the Study and Admiration of the Wisdom and Power of God, that made them all : These shew us good Reason why we should fear and serve this great and glorious, good and gracious God.

Thoughts occasioned by being at the Assizes.

WHAT a lively Emblem is here of the great Day of the general Judgment.

1. Many go out to meet the Judge ; which may put us in Mind of Christ's second Coming, which will be in his own Glory, and in the Glory of his Father with his holy Angels. At that Day, all the true Disciples of Jesus Christ shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the Air, 1 Thes. iv. 17.

2. The Solemnity is usher'd in with the Sound of the Trumpet. At the great Day the Trumpet shall sound, and all the Dead shall be raised, and called to stand before the Judge of Quick and Dead, Acts x. 42.

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3. The Tribunal is erected, and the Judge's Commission is read ; for he comes in the King's Name, and acts by Virtue of his Authority. It is GOD that has appointed both the Day and the Judge. *GOD has appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, Acts xviii. 31.*

4. The Multitude of Prisoners called to the Bar, being in Chains, may remind us of the greater Multitude that must *stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ*. But these harden'd Wretches, that now stand seemingly unconcern'd at the Bar of Men, will stand trembling at the Bar of Christ.

5. How terrible will be the Glory and Majesty of the Judge, to all the Wicked ! Before him all the Nations of the Earth will tremble, and at his Presence the Mountains and Islands *will fly away, and be no more found, Rev. xvi. 20.*

6. A most amazing Assembly will be called to attend at the Tribunal of Jesus Christ, not one City, or one Country, but the whole World, and all in every Age, and all in Heaven and Earth.

7. None shall appear there as idle Spectators, but every one of us shall have a Cause to be tried ; and that not a petty Cause, neither ; but of the greatest Importance and Concern, that ever was tried. That is, of Soul and Body, for all that we have ever done and spoken ; and there to receive a final Sentence for Life or Death, and that never to be revoked, but to stand to all Eternity. *Either, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, before the Foundation of the World : Or, Depart ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, Mat. xxv. 34, 41.*

8. Every one must appear at this Tribunal of Christ, and being there, it will also appear, what they are, how they have lived; what Improvement they have made of their Time, and other precious Talents; their many Sabbaths, the Trust of the Gospel, and all the good Advice of Friends; *every idle Word that Men have spoken, must they give Account of at the Day of Judgment.* What a Watch should Men keep over their Lips, that nothing vain, nothing filthy, nothing wicked and profane, proceed out of their Mouth; but every Word, that Men are willing should come into Judgment, and nothing else.

9. O what a surprizing Separation will be made in that Day, between Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Brethren and Sisters, and Fellow Servants; *one shall be taken and another left.* O my Soul, where shall I be set, at that Day? At the right or left Hand of Jesus Christ? Shall I be gathered with Sinners, or with Saints? O where will my Lot be cast? What do I now chuse? With whom do I now love to walk? What Life do I now live? Whose Work am I now doing? Should I not have a Care of *treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of GOD,* Rom. ii. 5. *If we look for such Things, what manner of Persons ought we to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness?* Do I now hear, and pray, and speak, and trade, as in the View and Remembrance of that great Day. Some shall there appear to their *Shame and everlasting Contempt,* Dan. xii. 2.

(1.) To their Shame; that ever they had chosen and served Sin. That they *had a Prize put in their Hand, and had not an Heart to get Wisdom.*

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That they neglected their precious Souls, and never sought the Favour of God in earnest. Now they are ashamed, that they are disappointed of their Hope, and ashamed that they are found naked, and among the Fools.

(2.) They shall be filled with everlasting Contempt. Then it will be said before all the World, This is the Man *that made not the Lord his Trust.*

This is the Man that made Gold his Hope.

This is the Man that preferred Earth before Heaven.

That's the Man that said to God, *Depart from us, we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*; and now behold how just his Sentence is; God gives him his own Words, *depart from me.*

This is the Man that said of Jesus Christ, *we will not have this Man to reign over us*; and now, he that would not touch the Golden Sceptre of his Grace, must feel the Weight of his Iron Rod.

This is the Man that despised Holiness, and made a Mock at Religion, and now must spend an Eternity in *Weeping and Wailing, and Gnashing his Teeth.*

Then shall Men return, and discern between them that serve GOD, and them that served him not.

Then Men will be able to answer the Question which they now put to themselves and others, *What Profit shall we have if we pray unto GOD?* Mal. iii. 14. But it is no Wonder, if those that are blind and foolish, and beside themselves, and such as are prejudic'd against all Goodness; if they make a wrong Judgment of Things.

They never made Trial of the Work, and Ways, and Service of God ; they have tried the Service of Sin ; but not the Service of Christ ; therefore what can they say ? They foolishly blame what they know nothing of. The People of God are certainly the best Judges, which is best, the Service of Sin, or the Service of God, for they have tried both. But Sinners bewray their present Weakness and Folly, in that they mock at that which they will wish for, when they come on their Death-Bed ; then they that would not pray before, will be full of their Wishes ; *O let me die the Death of the Righteous* ; O that I had lived a better Life ; that I had prayed more, and heard the Word of God more attentively. Now a thousand Worlds for a Dram of Grace. What a foolish Choice have I made ? O that I had chosen the good Part ; that I had taken more Care of my Soul ; that I had better improved my Time, and made Preparation for Eternity ; but now I fear 'tis too late.

Of the R A I N.

1. **W**HEN it is sent in Season, and in due Measure, then it is a very great Mercy to the Earth, to refresh and make it fruitful. *Levit. xxvi.*
4. *If you keep my Commandments, then I will give you Rain in due Season, and the Land shall yield her Increase.* And when it is sent out of Season, or out of Measure, that's a Judgment. How easily can God turn the most needful and useful Creatures, as Fire and Water, into great Judgments to a sinful People.

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2. When the Earth drinketh in the Rain, we expect it should bring forth good Fruit ; so when the Gospel drops heavenly Dews upon us, it is reasonably expected that we should bring forth good Fruit, *Heb. vi. 7, 8.* O make me as a watered Garden, refresh the Plants of Grace, which thine own Right-hand has planted, that being watered from Heaven, they may be fruitful.

3. The Rain is at the absolute Disposal of God, no Creature can give Rain. It is God that shuts up the Heavens, that there may be no Rain ; which has been sometimes restrained for the Sin of Man. *2 Chron. vi. 26, 27.* *When the Heaven is shut up, and there is no Rain, because they have sinned against thee ; yet if they pray towards this Place, and turn from their Sin, then hear thou in Heaven, and forgive the Sin, and send Rain upon the Land.* Natural Rain has been often kept back, and again, it has been procured by Prayer ; *James v. 17, 18.* *Elias was a Man subject to like Passions with us, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the Earth for the space of three Years and six Months. And he prayed again, and the Heaven gave Rain, and the Earth brought forth her Fruit.*

Thus has God punished spiritual Barrenness, by restraining the Rain of the Gospel. *Isai. v. 6.* *I will command the Clouds, that they rain no Rain upon it.* As to the natural Rain, we are not to live as Heathens, not taking Notice of the disposing Hand of God herein ; but if too much, or if unreasonable, we are to acknowledge God herein. If it is wanted, we should ask it by Prayer ; *Zeck. x. 1.* *Ask ye of the Lord Rain in the Time of the latter Rain, so shall the Lord make bright Clouds, and give them Showers of Rain, to every one Grass*

in the Field. Who can stay the Bottles of Heaven? God only, who governs in Heaven and Earth. And who can hinder the Influences of Heaven from falling on the needy Soul; when God will send his Dew of Gospel-Doctrine to fall here and there; *Deut. xxxii. 2. My Doctrine shall drop as the Rain, my Speech shall distil as the Dew, as the small Rain upon the tender Herb, and as the Showers upon the Grass.*

4. The Rain may bring to our Remembrance the certain Success of the Gospel. As all the Powers of the Earth cannot hinder the Rain from falling, so Earth and Hell cannot hinder the Success of the Gospel-Ministry; *Isai. lv. 10. As the Rain cometh down, and the Snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the Earth, that it may bring forth Fruit; so shall my Word be, it shall accomplish the Thing which I please.*

5. The Rain may remind us of Jesus Christ, in his saving, strengthening, quickening, and comforting Influences upon the Souls of his People; *Psal. lxxii. 6. He shall come down as Rain upon the new-mown Grass.* The Lord Jesus Christ is compar'd to Rain;

(1.) Because he came down from Heaven (and so do his Influences to needy Souls) as natural Rain.

(2.) As he is an Effect of God's meer Goodness; so is the natural Rain; *Matt. v. 45.* So is the Gospel.

(3.) Because his Benefits are for satisfying thirsty Souls, as the Rain satisfies the thirsty Ground.

(4.) Christ is compared to Showers of Rain, to denote the Fulness of Grace in him as a Fountain; and the Freeness of his Grace to Men: What ever Cost Men are at for other Necessaries, the Rain comes down without their Cost or Care.

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6. The Rain may remind us of the gracious Protection of God, or of Jesus Christ, over his People. When furious Storms may arise, and when the great Rains of outward Trouble shall befall them, then he will be a *Covert* to them *from Storm*, and *from Rain*, *Isai. iv. 6.* Lord, I would not be so much concern'd what Storms I may meet with, as that I may enjoy thy Presence with me; be thou my Covert and I shall be safe.

Of P R I D E.

CAN a wise Man be proud? No; but a Fool may. Fallen Man is proud, because he was first made a Fool by Sin; *Job xi. 12.* *Vain Man would be wise* (he would be thought so) *though he is born like the wild Ass's Colt.*

1. Should Man be proud, that is born blind? Proud! when he knows nothing as he ought to know.

2. Has fallen Man any Reason to be proud, when he is beside himself? When God changes his Heart, then he comes to himself, *Luke xv. 17.* and not till then.

3. Should a naked or a ragged Man be proud? For when he has never so rich Cloathing upon his Body, his Soul has nothing to cover it but filthy Rags; *All our Righteousnesses are but filthy Rags, Isai. lxiv. 6.*

4. Has he any Occasion to be proud, that is miserably poor? that has nothing but what he is beholden to another for? Nothing is our own by Nature, but Sin and Misery.

5. Have they any Reason to be proud, that carry about them a vile Body, subject to the most loathsome

loathsome Diseases, and which must shortly be laid in the Grave, and be Meat for Worms? Does it deserve all this Cost, and Care, and Time in Dressing? Surely the Soul deserves more.

6. Have they any Occasion to be proud, that are under a just Sentence of Condemnation? A Prisoner in Chains, that is beholden to the King's Mercy, that he is not already executed.

7. Should any be proud of Gifts and Parts, Knowledge and Notions, who has nothing but by free Gift from God? *Who made thee to differ from another, or, what hast thou that thou hast not received,* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

8. Should Men be proud of what they have in this World, when they are but Stewards, and must shortly give an Account of their Stewardship, *Luke xvi. 2.*

9. Should any be proud of any Thing they have done? They should rather think how much they have done amiss; and how much they have left undone. O teach me the Lesson of Humility, Lord, let that be my Cloathing: So much Humility, so much Conformity to Jesus Christ. But Pride, as it consists in a Conformity to Satan, so it was the Condemnation of the Devil.

10. Are any proud of their high Descent? None are born Children of God, by virtue of their natural Blood. Children of Nobles, as well as others, are all Children of Wrath by Nature, *Eph. ii. 3.* if any of them are now become Children of God, it is not of Blood, but of God, *John i. 13.* And Children of good, or of gracious Parents, are born *Children of Wrath, even as others*: Grace does not descend from Parents to Children, as earthly Inheritances do.

11. Are any proud of their Honours? *All the Glory of Man is as the Flower of the Grass; the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away, Isai. xl. 6, 7.* If we have not the Honour that cometh from God only, we shall at last be the more miserable. Thanks be to God, for better Riches than this World's, the Inheritance of the Saints. I have a goodly Heritage. I am related to the King of Kings. *Christ is mine, and I am his.*

The LOOKING-GLASS.

1. **D**OES the Face appear clean and beautiful; but what is in the Heart? How is it with the Soul, is that cleansed? Is the Body well dress'd with rich Clothes, or of the new Fashion? But is the Soul clothed with the best Robe, the Righteousness of Jesus Christ?

2. If the Body appears never so well in order, yet it is but a vile Body; Beauty is but Skin-deep: In a little while, this Face will be eaten with Worms. Should I think of my Skin, or Beauty and Colour, it is but Dust and Ashes. Pale Death will make a great Change upon it in a little while.

3. The Glass receives the very Image of the Face, that looks into it; but could it shew what is in the Heart, many Persons would not so often look into it. And surely they could not so much admire themselves.

4. What shews it self in the Glass, is a more lively Representation of the Person, than any Picture can be; for here you have Motion as well as Form and exact Colour; yet there is no Communication between the Person and the Image, in the Glass. Just so is the bare, nominal out-side Professor:

feffor: He is the Picture of a true Christian, but he has no Life. The true Christian has the Image of God, not as the Glas receives the Image of the Person that looks into it, but so as to be a Partaker of the divine Nature.

5. So a natural Man *beholds his natural State in the Glas of the Word, and goeth away, and quickly forgetteth what manner of Man he was,* James i. 23.

6. We all need to see what is within, even in the Heart, what the Looking Glas cannot shew us. That View might have a very different Effect, from what is commonly produc'd by looking in the Glas: Viewing the Skin, often produces Pride; the other might teach us Humility.

O may I more use the Glas of the Word, and there see what I have been, and what I now am; my Defects and Deformity, my Spots and Blemishes; and never forget them. May I, therein, *behold the Glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, as by the Lord the Spirit.* Henceforth may I use this very convenient Piece of Household-Furniture, only for Decency, not for Pride. And may I never see my Face in it, but may think of my Heart, and of the Dress and Frame of my Soul; and spend, at least, as much time, to get that also prepar'd to draw near to God.

On reading the Pharisee's Prayer.

1. **T**HAT's a very strange Prayer indeed, wherein is no Confession of Sin. If he had liv'd sinless, Why did he pray at all? And if he had sinned, Why did he not say to God, *I have sinned against*

against Heaven, and before thee, as a true Penitent should do, *Luke xv. 18.*

2. That's a strange Prayer, that has not one Petition in it. Did the Man want nothing, neither for himself nor for others; for Soul nor Body; neither Wisdom nor Strength, Grace nor Pardon? This was one that thought he *needed not the Physician*, *Matt. ix. 12.*

3. That's a strange Prayer, that's made up all of Thanksgiving. We ought, indeed, to give Thanks for what we have already receiv'd; but there is something else to do in Prayer, or else it is no Prayer at all.

4. That's a strange Prayer, where a Man can reckon up his good Deeds, and forget, or at least never mention his evil Deeds.

5. That's a strange Prayer, wherein a Man can boldly tell God, the Searcher of Hearts, how good he is, and how many good Things he has done, and never mention how many Duties he has left undone; or how poorly he has perform'd them. O empty Heart, that can speak thus to Fellow-Professors! And, proud Soul, that can speak so to God, the Searcher of Hearts and Reins!

6. That's a strange Prayer, wherein a Man justifieth himself, and condemns others; wherein is much Pride and Presumption, but no Charity.

Though he ushers in his Speech, with God, I thank thee, yet the Assertion was false. *I thank thee that I am better than other Men*; and a better Man than this *Publican*. Suppose this had been true, as it was not; yet would that have been enough for him, or for any other Man, that he was not so bad as some others? No, verily, it is not enough; though they thank God for it, and therein seem, at least, to own his restraining Grace.

Grace. [It's well if they consider what they say therein] And what does all this come to, but to thank God that they do not make quite so much haste to Hell as some others do? This is the Truth of their Case, that without the Change of their Heart, without Faith in Christ, Repentance and Holiness, such an one will walk on to Hell by easy Steps, tho' he does not make so much haste thither as some others do. O may I have the humble Heart of the *Publican*, to confess my Sins with Grief, and to look, alone, to the Merits of Jesus Christ, for the Pardon of my Sins.

Of Venomous Creatures.

SEEING a Toad of a prodigious Bigness crossing my Path, I had such Thoughts as these upon the ungrateful Sight.

1. How loathsom is this Creature to me! Yet every impenitent Sinner is viler than this Creature, and every one's beloved Sin is more loathsom in the Eyes of God, than this Creature can be to me.

2. This Creature, as it came out of the Hands of God, is the Product of infinite Wisdom. Fallen Man, void of Grace, is a thousand Times worse than this vile Creature.

3. Is this a poisonous Creature? So is Man's beloved Sin. *The Poison of Asps* [that is, Sin] *is under their Tongue*, [that is, in their Hearts and delightful Thoughts] Rom. iii. 13.

4. Would it be an Affliction to me, to have this Creature in my Bosom? I shrink at the Thoughts of it; yet the Lovers of Sin harbour a far worse Thing in their Hearts, that which has ruin'd Thousands in Soul and Body.

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5. Did I start at, and make haste away from this filthy, loathsome Creature? O may I more hate Sin, and hasten from it, and from the very Appearance of it; and find more loathing of Sin, and sinful Self, than I found rising against that Creature.

6. Do Men kill these venomous Creatures wherever they find them, if they can accomplish it, and make no Scruple about it? O what a Wonder is it, that GOD, who is infinite in Holiness, does not destroy every filthy, loathsome Sinner! And my self, who was once among the very Chief of them.

(7.) This filthy Creature that we can hardly bear in our Sight, is better than those that die in their Sins. Impenitent Sinners will have Occasion to wish, at last, that they could have ended their Being and Life together. But Men die to live to all Eternity in Blessedness or Misery.

(8.) O what does divine Grace do for poor, humble, repenting Sinners, in cleansing their Natures, and making them fit for the Presence and Service of GOD, and Jesus Christ. *Such were some of you, but ye are sanctified by the Spirit of GOD,* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

On seeing a decay'd Gentleman, swaggering, tho' begging in the Street, in a ragged Gown.

1. **T**HIS is a Picture of Self-righteous Sinners, that are proud of their own Righteousness, tho' it is but filthy Raggs. Tho' these Garments, like this decay'd Gentleman's, might be valuable once, yet now they are ragged, they can be no longer Ornaments for us.

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2. Every one in their natural Estate, is like this Bankrupt; they had an Estate, but have spent it; and tho' they have nothing, yet are proud.

3. Man, by Sin, has lost all that he had, and has nothing now to live upon, but the Charity of others. Fallen Man is beholden to the Charity of God, in Christ, for Necessaries both for Soul and Body.

4. Fallen Man, like this Gentleman, has a Title, without an Estate. So is a bare Professor without true Grace, one call'd a Christian without the Image of Christ, or any Thing in his Heart to answer the Name.

5. True Nobility consists in Relation to God in Jesus Christ, and that Relation shall never be dissolv'd, nor will God ever disown it.

6. True Riches are the most suitable and durable Estate; these shall never be taken away. The Favour of God and true Grace, and an Interest in the New Covenant, and its blessed Promises, will never disappoint the Owner.

7. True Grace ever teaches Men to be humble, and brings the Spirit to submit to the Condition. The Man that is proud when he is in Honour, hardly knows himself; and he that is proud in Adversity, knows not his own Heart; such an one doubles his Affliction: For it is an Addition to his Affliction of Poverty, that he must be beholden to the Charity of another.

8. How much better is a poor, humble Christian, that lives upon Free-Grace, and is ready to acknowledge himself beholden to God and his kind Friends, for every Thing he enjoys; such an one will be thankful to both: But the proud Man is unthankful, and the Unthankful are also unholy, 2 Tim. iii. 2.

*On the Reading 1 Sam. ii. 12. That Eli's Sons
did not know the Lord.*

1. **I**T seems a very strange Expression : What ! The Priests of the Lord, and yet not know the Lord ! Yes, for tho' they knew his Name, and had the Notion of his Perfections ; yet they did not act agreeable to their Knowledge of God ; they lived wickedly, and like Atheists.

2. May not this give us a very melancholy View of the State of the Churches at this Day ? How many Priests live like the Sons of *Eli*, whose Conversation and Speech declare, That *they know not the Lord*. What Occasion do they give to many, to conclude, that they are Strangers to the Grace of God, and to the Worth of their own Souls, and others ! While, by their light, vain Conversation, they cause the *Ways of GOD to be evil spoken of*, and harden others in their sinful Courses ; and like the wicked and prophane Priests of old, cause the *Worship of GOD to be contemned*, if not, by some, to be *abhorred*, Ver. 17.

3. *Eli's Sons* were concern'd for the Fat and the Sweet, more than for the Honour of God, or for the Good of Souls. Whether this is not a common reigning Disease of our Day, deserves to be seriously consider'd, and laid to Heart by true Christians.

4. GOD will not know them, at last, that did not know him while here. Jesus Christ *will be revealed in flaming Fire from Heaven, taking Vengeance on them that know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel*. Those that do not obey the Word of God, are, in a Manner, all one as those that do not know

the Word. Those that walk in the *Ways of Sin* while here, shall never be known, nor approv'd of by God hereafter : Then he will say to all Evil-doers ; *Verily I say unto you, I know you not, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity.* Holy Garments, and Holy Orders, will not defend them from falling among *the Workers of Iniquity.*

5. What need have we to pray, that God would pour out his Spirit of Grace and Holiness upon Ministers and People ; then may we hope for more Light, and more Purity of Doctrines, and more holy Lives, among its Preachers and Professors. Did the Hearers pray more for their Ministers, then they might preach better. And did Ministers preach and live better, taking Care, as they ought, to be Examples of Piety to their Flock ; we might see a better Face of Religion among us, than we behold at this Day, *Psal. cxxxii. 9, 16.*

On Reading Matt. viii. Of the great Herd of Swine that was destroy'd by the Evil Spirits.

Quest. **W**HY did the Devils desire Leave to enter into the great Herd of Swine ?

Ans^r. They were over-rul'd in this Matter, openly to ask Leave of Jesus Christ, that all might know and remember, that those powerful Spirits can do nothing, without Christ's Leave and Permission, *Job ii. 6.*

1. Perhaps the Devil's Design might be, to incense the Owners against Jesus Christ, and put them upon sending him out of their Country ; and so they did, supposing him to be their common Enemy.

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2. They were over-rul'd in this Petition, that they might have Leave to enter into the Swine; to shew us, that when Satan cannot do all the Mischief that he wou'd, then he will do all he can: If he cannot destroy Men, then he will tempt them. If he cannot hurt Men's Persons, then he delights to injure their Estates and worldly Substance; as in the Case of *Job*, destroying his Cattle.

Quest. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ give them Leave to enter into the Herd of Swine; especially, when he knew that Satan's Designs was to destroy them all?

Ans^w. Not because he allows of the Abuse of any Creature, for he has often forbidden it in his Word. But,

1. It might be permitted, to convince the Owners of their Covetousness, and to shew them, what was in their Hearts, that they were more concern'd for their Swine, than for their Souls:

2. This might be permitted, for a Rebuke to some of the Apostate Jews in those Parts, in that they kept such great Numbers of those unclean Creatures, contrary to the Word of God.

3. Jesus Christ might permit those Brute-Creatures to perish, with a Design to do Good to some Soul, by the Providence. There were many *Saducees* among them, that did not believe that there was any such Thing as an Angel or Spirit: But hereby they might see, that there is a World of Spirits; that there are invisible Powers, that can do such Things as they saw, first upon the Man that Christ set free, and then upon the Herd.

4. To convince them and us, what powerful, malicious Enemies Mankind have to watch, and pray for Help against, Satan, with his Armies, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour: And

therein he is compar'd to a roaring, or an hungry Lyon.

5. To let all the Lovers of Sin, and such as trade in it, see, and consider, in time, what a Master they serve, and what Wages they must expect.

6. To be a lively Representation of the present Practice of all impenitent Sinners: Like this great Herd of Swine, they *run violently down towards the Lake*; [the Lake of Fire and Brimstone] they make Haste to Ruin and Destruction. This will be the miserable End of all impenitent Sinners, who live like Swine, wallowing in the Mire of Sin, and delighting so to do.

7. This might be permitted, to shew all unclean Souls [all impenitent Sinners] that they are the Habitation of unclean Spirits. So many reigning Lusts as are in the Heart, so many unclean Spirits dwell there. When God changes any one Heart, he casts out of it more than *Seven Devils*, Mark xvi. 9.

8. To convince them and us, what Need we have of the Presence of Christ, and of a Share in his Protection and kind Providence, when there are so many powerful, watchful, malicious, cruel Spirits at work, in the Place where we live.

Satan is the strong Man, arm'd; but Jesus Christ is stronger than he, and can keep, as well as cast him out. I desire, with the poor Man, to sit at Jesus' Feet. Lord, let me have thy Presence, let me be with thee, whatever becomes of the Herd. I am willing to let all my Sins and filthy Lusts go; and henceforth would be holy in all manner of Conversation, and embrace every proper Occasion, to tell *how great Things GOD has done for me*, Mark v. 19.

Thoughts on God's sovereign Right to dispose of all his Creatures, as seemeth good to himself; from *Dan. iv. 34, 35.* *And at the End of the Days, I Nebuchadnezzar lift up mine Eyes unto Heaven, and mine Understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever; whose Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, and his Kingdom is from Generation to Generation. And all the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing, and he doth according to his Will, in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, What dost thou.*

THIS Sovereignty of God, is acknowledg'd by many that will not allow him the Exercise of it among his Creatures: Though Man himself goes to the utmost Limits of his Power, among the inferior Creatures, over which he is made the Lord, but not the Tyrant, *Psal. viii.*

1. The Owner of a Flock or Herd, kills or keeps alive as seemeth good to himself, and does not reckon himself accountable to any Man, for what he does therein.

2. Every Gentleman kills the Game as often as he thinks fit, or at least, as often as he can come at it; yet he and we are more at the Disposal of God, than the Creatures are at the Disposal of any Man.

3. Shall we not allow the great LORD and Owner of all in Heaven and Earth, the same Right and Liberty to do what he will with his own: For
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we are his, more than our own ; or more than any Thing we possess, is ours. Shall not God call for his own when he pleases, as we our selves do for what we call ours.

4. We did not give any of the Creatures Life ; and when they are dead, we cannot restore Life : And yet we do not scruple to put them to Death at our Pleasure. But God can kill, and make alive ; he gives us and them Breath. We ought, therefore, to allow him the Right to dispose of all, as pleaseth him.

5. We were framed out of the Dust, as well as the meaner Creatures that, we say, are at our Disposal : They are our Fellow-Creatures ; yet we make no Scruple to kill them at our Pleasure. Then, shall not God be allow'd to do what he pleases with his own ?

6. The wicked Owners of some of these Creatures, do not serve their Generation, so well as these poor Creatures do. Some of the Owners are viler than the Beasts that perish !

7. Men allow themselves the Liberty to kill a Fly, a Spider, a Snake, &c. at their Pleasure ; yet these are our Fellow-Creatures, and their Life is all that they have : And this all Men do, without blaming each other ; tho' sinful Man is more vile and hurtful, than those they put to Death when they please.

O may I ever, with Heart and Mouth, in Sincerity, use that Language of Grace ; *It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth good in his Sight. Lord, not my Will, but thine be done.*

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Thoughts occasion'd by seeing one very bad with the King's Evil, and hearing the Physician say,
 " This Disease being Hereditary, is hardly ever
 " like to be cur'd: I can do no more for
 " you.

1. **WHAT** a Mercy is it, that this is not my Case, or the Affliction of my Children! The Lord has the Ordering of it, and sends it where he pleases; and might have given it Commission to have seiz'd on my Relations, or on my self.

2. I had a worse Disease by Nature, from the Sole of the Foot, even to the Head; I was, in the Sight of God, a filthy, loathsome Creature; so is Sin in our Nature, and it is Hereditary: It defiles the whole Man, and descends as a miserable Inheritance, from one Generation to another.

3. Sin is truly the King's Evil, as none but God can cure it; *What is impossible with Men, is possible with GOD.* He can heal the most dangerous Diseases, though they may be Hereditary. When any came to Jesus Christ for Cure, in the Days of his Ministry upon Earth, it is said, *That he healed them all.* He bid the Disciples of *John*, Go tell your Master, *The Blind see, the Deaf hear, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed.* He sent none away without a Cure.

4. Jesus Christ, the great Physician, has wrought a *Miracle of Grace upon my Soul.* He has pardon'd my Sins, that's the Healing of my Diseases, *Psal. ciii. 2.* He has wash'd and cleans'd my Soul, and tho' I have here and there a Spot, or a Scar remaining,

remaining, to put me in Mind what I was; yet, Thanks to divine Grace, that Sin does not reign in me; for I do not allow of it; it is my Burthen. Though I have my Iniquity, that which does so easily beset me, yet I have no beloved Sin. Sin continues in me, but, thro' Grace, I do not continue in my Sin. Sin is alive in me, but I am dead to Sin, and alive to God. Tho' Sin remains, yet it doth not reign in me; for I do *not yield my self a Servant, to obey it.* I do not live without Sin, but that which I do contrary to the Word of God, I allow not.

5. Now, what should I offer to God for my Healing and Cleansing? *Luke v. 14.*

[1.] I would offer to God my sincere Praises. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name: Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits; who pardoneth all thine Iniquities, and healeth all thy Diseases,* Psal. ciii. 1, 2.

[2.] I will offer to God my self, my whole Man, my Soul and Body. O how reasonable is this Service! *Rom. xii. 1, 2.*

[3.] I will offer to God my Time, and my Strength. Lord, by thy Grace, all I am, all I have, I now devote to thee. I am *thy Servant, truly I am thy Servant, thou hast loosed my Bonds.* And, I would not use my Liberty for an Occasion to the Flesh, but be bound by the Cords of Love; to serve thee while I live.

6. How careful should I be, from henceforth; of every defiling Thing, of all infectious Company, and to shun all Appearance of Evil? Keep thy self pure. The Soul deserves as much Care as the Body.

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7. All that are healed, should commend the great Physician to others, that are not yet healed. Tell them how skilful, and how successful he is : None die under his Hands. Tell them how ready he is to undertake the Cure of all that are willing to be healed ; and tell them that he does all *Gratis*, without Money, and without Price. Tell them, that it grieves him, that no more, among all the Multitudes that hear of him, are willing to seek his Help, and be healed by him.

8. Are you willing to be healed by Christ ?

It is not ask'd, whether you are willing to go to Heaven when you die ? But, as Jesus Christ ask'd the Leper, *John v. 6. Wilt thou be made clean ?* Doubtless the Man could say, yes ; with all my Heart. But how is it with you ? Are you willing to part with Sin, and willing to be sanctify'd ? O what a Mercy would it be, if poor Souls were as sensible of their Diseases, of their fatal Ignorance, their Guilt, the Power of Sin, and their present Wants ! And shew'd the same Prudence, in looking for the Help of the great Physician, as they do for the best Help, when their Bodies call for it.

Thoughts on the curious Frame of our own Body.

THE *Psalmist* made himself [as well as the heavenly Lights, and the Beasts of the Earth, and Fishes of the Sea] the Matter of his pious Study : For, should a good Man be the greatest Stranger at Home ! *Psal. cxxxix. 14. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* There are many Things very wonderful, in every single Member of Man's Body ;

Body ; and there is much to be admir'd in the Composure and Harmony of the whole.

1. It is wonderful from its Beginning, *Eccles. xi. 5. How the Bones do grow in the Womb* ; how the Infant lives, seemingly shut up, without Air, grows without Eating and Drinking ; the Pulses beat, the Blood circulates : It is a Wonder, how it ever sees the Light. This is equal to God's Work of Creation. O how artfully and usefully are the Bones all plac'd ! How curiously knit together, to strengthen the whole Frame ! This was not a Fruit of the Care or Skill of the Parents, not an Effect of Chance : But *all our Members* are before written in the *Book of GOD* ; *Psal. cxxxix. 16.* Did God take Care of me, when I could not take Care of my self, should I now distrust the Providence and Care of God ! *Lord, help my Unbelief, Mark ix. 24.*

2. How wonderful is the Composure of the Nerves, Arteries and Veins ! The one, as most curious Cords to unite all the Parts together ; the other, as Pipes and Channels, to carry the Blood and Spirits to every Part, for the Nourishment of the whole : And not one of them all idle or useles.

3. How wonderful the curious Structure of the Ear ! So useful to distinguish Sounds one from another ; and to render Life the more comfortable, by conversing with Men, and by being delighted with sweet Sounds. If this Organ fails, much of the Comfort of Life is wanting ; and it is not in the Power of Man to make up Nature's Defect herein.

This is the Gate of Knowledge, whereby we learn the Oracles of God ; therefore Man's eternal Happiness seems to depend much upon the Use of it : With it, we hear the Gospel preached, learn the

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the Mind of God, and know the Way of Salvation :
For Faith comes by Hearing, Rom. x. 17.

4. O how curious is the Frame of the Eyes, wonderful for their Position, their many transparent Coats, their Chrystal Juices ; the Motion of the whole, and the Application of the Sight in discerning particular Objects. Every Thing in this curious Instrument of Sight, is truly wonderful. The very Eye-lids are of excellent Use, frequently to keep off Dust from the Eye, and at the same Motion, to convey convenient Moisture, to preserve the Sight. Was this curious Part of Man's Body as much expos'd to Dust, as some other Parts are, the Eye would be of far less Service to Man, besides the perpetual Trouble of Dust and Flies that would anoy them. These are as Windows to the whole House of the Body ; and how uncomfortable would the House be without Light ! Yet these, oftentimes, prove a Diversion to the Mind, and an Occasion to the Wandering of the Thoughts from better Things. The Eyes, so briskly roving from one Thing to another, seldom allow the Mind sufficient Time, profitably to consider any Thing. This made one of the Antients say, *You must shut your Eyes, if you wou'd see clearly.* This is the Part of the Body we are so tender and careful of. So should we *keep the Commandments of GOD.*
 — And so *GOD keeps his People : He that toucheth you, saith God, toucheth the Apple of mine Eye, Zech. ii. 8.*

5. The Motion of the Blood, in its Circulation in the Body, is very wonderful. So swiftly running its Course thro' all the Members, Day and Night, Sleeping and Waking ; to keep every Part warm, lively, and useful, and preserve them from perishing. The Heart is, as it were, the Fountain, re-
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ceiving the Streams of Blood from the Veins, and then forcing it back again thro' the Arteries ; like Water convey'd from a Water-house thro' Pipes, first to Streets, then to particular Houses, then to several Rooms in each House. But this is much more wonderful, that the Blood, which is now in the Head or Heart, will be presently in the Hands, or in the Feet, and then run up again to the Head.

6. It is wonderful what is the first Spring of Life ! What is the first Mover in this curious Piece of divine Workmanship ! He that made it can tell, and none but he. This is the little World, that has employ'd the Study of Thousands in every Age ; and still leaves the wisest Men much in the Dark, as to many Things contain'd in its Frame. Man's own Body alone, or a Part of it, would afford Matter of Study for a wise Man all his Life.

7. It is wonderful how the Bellows [or drawing in, and breathing out] of the Lungs keeps working Day and Night ; and how the Pulses keep their constant Strokes, even when we are fast asleep, and can take no Care or Thought about it. Here is the true *Perpetual Motion*, that never stands still, from the Beginning to the End of Life, tho' the Person live an hundred Years.

8. It is wonderful, that tho' there are so many Millions of Men in the World, yet are there not two Faces, nor two Voices, exactly alike : So the wise Creator has order'd it, that one might not counterfeit another, in Trading, or in bearing Witness ; and that the Innocent might not suffer for the Guilty. And so has God order'd it, with respect to their Hand-writing ; that it is almost as difficult a Thing to counterfeit a Man's Hand, as his Face, or his Voice.

9. Nothing

9. Nothing in the Body of Man could have been order'd better than it is now done ; there's nothing in it too much ; nothing can be spar'd ; nothing needs to be added to it. *O how wonderful are thy Works, O Lord, in Wisdom hast thou made them all, I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

10. But after all this is said of the Body, and a thousand Times more that might be said, this is but the meaner Part of the Man : This is but a Cabinet to contain something more noble ; and that is the Soul. Did God make such a curious Case for it ? Then the Jewel must needs be much more valuable.

11. As a wise Man would not make a curious and costly Piece of Work, without some good View and End ; so God has made this most noble Piece of all his lower Works, that Man might glorify *GOD with his Body, and with his Spirit, [or his Soul] which are GOD's, Rom. vi. 13.*

O may I never, henceforth, be such a Stranger at Home. May thy Spirit of Grace dwell in this Temple, and keep it clean, for his own Use. And in my Frame may I admire thy Wisdom, Power, and Goodness ; and be sweetly led from my self, to him that is the Original of all Things. How wonderful must he be that made both Body and Soul ! *For he that built the House, hath more Honour than the House, Heb. iii. 3.*

Thoughts on a young Lord of a Manor, that was just come to a great Estate; and also on hearing his Steward say to him, "Now, Sir, you are in your own Lordship: This is your Royalty."

1. **H**OW like was this young Lord of the Manor, to the Children of God, that have a vast Estate, and know but little of it. *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath entered into the Heart of Man, what GOD hath prepared for them that love him.* God himself, in all Persons and Perfections, *Lam. iii. 24. The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul,* and all the Blessings of the New-Covenant are their's. *All Things are yours, for ye are Christ's.* Heaven it self is their's, with all that it contains; *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* So that when they shall see what it is, and be able to make out their Interest therein; they will say, *the Lines are fallen to me in pleasant Places, I have a goodly Heritage.*

2. The Steward knew the Estate better than the young Lord himself; perhaps another may know the Estate, and the Heir's Right to it, better than the young Convert. Ministers and experienc'd Christians may be better able to judge of the Change of the Soul, of their Faith in Christ, of their Love to him, and of their Repentance, and so of their Heirship to Heaven, than the young Heir himself may be.

3. Men do not come to be Heirs of the heavenly Inheritance, the same Way that this young Lord came to his Estate, that is, by Blood, or by natural Descent, but by the free Gift of God, and by the
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Grace of Adoption; we were all born in Sin, Heirs of Wrath, but GOD makes some to become his dear Children; and through Christ freely gives them the Estate, who had no Right to it by Nature.

4. What should the Children of GOD, and Heirs of Glory do, but love and serve the Lord, all the Days of their Life, *Be ye Followers, or Imitators, of GOD, as dear Children, and walk in Love one towards another, as Heirs together of the Grace of Life.*

Thoughts occasion'd by seeing the Sun Setting.

1. **T**HE Setting of the Sun is really necessary, to divide the Day from the Night, and give us an Opportunity to view the other curious Works of the Heavens, which would be hid from our Notice, if the more glorious Light of the Sun did not withdraw from us for a Season. When the Sun of Righteousness withdraws his comforting Beams from the Soul, that Day of Adversity calls us to consider more closely our Hearts, Works, and Ways.

2. The Setting of the Sun is necessary, to put an End to the Labour of the Day, both for Man and Beast; and to give them a Season to rest, whose Strength could not hold out without it. If the Length of the Day was to be measured out by some Men; sometimes when they are in the warm Pursuit of this World, they would be ready to say, *Sun, stand thou still* till this Affair is finished.

3. Now the Sun has finished his Day's Work, as to our Hemisphere, *Have I done my Work?*

What have I done for God, for my own Soul, or for my Generation to Day? Where have my Thoughts been? How have I employed my precious Hours? What if this should be my last Day?

4. What a dismal Sight would this Setting of the Sun be, if I could certainly know, that I should never see the Light of the Sun any more? But when the Sun sets, we expect it will rise again; so when it is Night with our Souls, we hope to see the Light of another Morning. *Weeping may endure for a Night, but Joy cometh in the Morning,* Psal. xxx. 5.

Thoughts upon the Spider and his Web, a very proper Means to bring us to the Remembrance of Satan, and his Temptations, which are every where ready for us.

1. **T**HIS Creature is like the Devil, for his filthy poisonous Nature.

2. Like Satan, he spreadeth his Net in proper Places, where it is most likely to catch his Prey.

3. He spinneth his Web out of his own Bowels; so Satan, when he telleth a Lie to ensnare Souls, telleth of his own; and he himself must answer for his ensnaring of Souls.

4. He watcheth continually, and lieth in wait to destroy those that are taken in the Snare: So it is said, *Your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.* The Spider is said to have six Eyes; Satan is vigilant, and we should be watchful too.

5. This

5. This Creature spins its Web so fine, that the Snare can hardly be seen, at least, by those that make so much haste, as his Captives commonly do: So does Satan hide his Snare, and lay his Net out of Sight. O what need have we to pray, *lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil: Save us from the evil One.*

6. The Spider makes his Work very artfully; there seems a great deal of Skill in the Form and Manner of hanging it: Satan makes his Temptations look fair and beautiful: He is a skilful Workman, he has been long at the Trade of tempting Souls to sin.

7. The Weakest are soonest ensnar'd; oftentimes the strong ones break through it; but then they must not stand and parley with him, but haste away.

8. If the Web is at any Time broken by any, the Spider mends it presently, or else makes a new one: So Satan either strengthens the old Temptation, or prepares a new one; when one Bait will not do, he tries another; so he did by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, *Mat. iv.* What Reason is there that we should *watch and pray that we enter not into Temptation*; or that God would break his Snare, that we may escape. Never see this Creature and his Work, but think that every House, every Room is beset with evil Spirits, laying Snares for you.

Thoughts on seeing the Snail.

1. **I**T is the very Picture of a slothful Person in Matters of this Life; devouring and eating up that which others take Pains and Care for.

Sloth-

Slothfulness is sinful; *not slothful in Business, but fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*, Rom. xii. 11.

2. This is the very Picture of all Men by Nature, in Matters of God and their Souls. Tho' this Creature moves, yet it has no Feet; and a natural Man has no Affections, (which in Scripture are called the Feet of the Soul) to carry him towards Heaven.

3. Wherever this Creature goes it carries its House with it: So it is like some that go to the Worship of God, but carry their House, that is, their worldly Concerns with them, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31.*

4. If this Creature has any Eyes, it makes little use of them; for it gropes and feels out its Way: So poor Sinners, in their natural State, have Eyes and see not; they *grobe at Noon-day as in the Night*, Job v. 14.

5. This Creature cannot endure to have Salt come near it; if Salt be cast on it, it melts and dies away. How contrary is corrupt Nature to the Word and Grace of God, which, in Scripture is compar'd to Salt. O may I be more seasoned with it, that my Filth may be purged away.

6. This Creature cannot bear the Light and Heat of the Sun: Sinners cannot endure the Light of the Word of God; Because their Works are evil, they love Darknefs; and cannot endure warming Ordinances.

7. This Creature, though its Life is in danger, yet keeps its old Pace: So, though Sinners are told of their Danger, and of the Necessity of their *fleeing from the Wrath to come*; yet they neither mend their Pace, nor change their Path. In Matters of this World, how like the swift-footed Creatures are most Men! but in Matters of God and

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Religion, too much like the sluggish Snail. Since the Soul that's destitute of Grace, is like the Snail that cannot mend its Pace; Lord, change the Frame, and give it the Wings of the Dove or Eagle, that it may mount up towards Heaven. O may I be quickened in the Ways of the Lord, that I may *run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.*

Thoughts on reading Gen. i. God saw every Thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. We are told, that at the End of every Day's Work, GOD takes a View of what he had done that Day, and he saw that it was very good: For, indeed, GOD can do nothing amiss.

1. **A**T the End of each of our Day's Work, we also should look back, and review what we have done. Where have I been to Day? what have I spoken? how have I behaved my self when alone, or in Company, when in my Family, or in my Shop? what Work have I done, and of what kind has it been? can I say as God did of his Work; *behold it was very good.*

2. If I my self, who am the Servant, neglect to review my Work, my Lord and Master will surely inspect it, at the End of the Day. And will know how I have spent my Time; whether I have laboured or loitered. Will my Lord say to me, when he returns, *Well done, good and faithful Servant?* or, will he call me *wicked and slothful Servant?*

3. If I can give but a poor Account of Time past, then it is high Time now to be up and doing; for,

(1.) It

(1.) It was late in the Day before I began my Lord's Work. How much of the Day did I stand idle in the Market-place.

(2.) I have a great deal of Work to do for God, for my self, for my Generation, and for those that are about me.

(3.) An Eternity of Blessedness depends on what I am now to do: A glorious Reward, not of Debt, but of Grace. Should I expect the Crown of Life without running? Should I expect the blessed Sentence of *Well done*, if I am a *slothful Servant*? or if I am a Stranger to, or *weary in well doing*?

(4.) This is the only Time wherein I can do the Work of my Day. Some Things appointed me now to do, cannot be done after this uncertain Life is ended. *Work while it is Day, the Night cometh wherein no Man can work*, John ix. 4.

Thoughts upon weighing any thing in the Shop.

1. **W**HEN Men trade for their Living, they will not take Money without telling it, and examining it by the Touch-stone, whether it is good, and by the Scales sometimes, whether it holds Weight.

2. So should I try my Heart, my Profession, my Knowledge, of what kind it is; my Ends in Religion; my supposed Grace; and all my Duties. How careful should I be in my spiritual Trading, that I do not take counterfeit Grace for true Grace; for that's the Way to undo my self for ever. If I take a bad Piece of Money, my Damage may be but little; but if I mistake in Soul Matters, how surprized shall I be at last, when

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when my [supposed] *Gold becomes Dross, and when my Wine is [found to be] mix'd with Water*, Isa. i. 22.

3. I must not reckon my Duties by the Tale, as the Papists do by their Beads, and conclude that they have said their *Pater-Noster* often enough; when they are come again to the Cross, where they began. But I must enquire, not how much only, but after what Manner I have done them? What Grace has been in Exercise? and were they performed in an holy Fear of God? had I an humble Sense of Sin, and of my own Unworthiness, upon my Heart? were they done in the Name and Strength of Jesus Christ? Without these, I may *think my self something, when I am nothing; and so deceive my self.*

4. God abhors false Ballances, and false Weights. If I would be careful, to give every Body their Weight and Measure; that's well; but I must also weigh and measure my self, and all my Actions; not by the false Ballances of Satan, or of the World, and so judge of my self as they may flatter me; nor in the Scales of Self-love; but I should weigh my self and Designs, my Words and Thoughts, as God will do, in the Ballance of the Sanctuary.

5. Shall I hold Weight, or shall I be found wanting, when God shall try me? Have not my Words and my Duties been too light? have they not wanted Faith, Repentance, Humility and holy Affections? have they not wanted an holy Fear of God? have they not wanted sincere Love? have they not wanted spiritual Hunger and Thirst? has not my Conversation been too light? Lord, when thou shalt weigh me in the Ballances of the Sanctuary, let the Righteousness of Christ weigh for me.

Thoughts

*Thoughts upon altering, enlarging, or changing
our Dwelling; or seeing others do so.*

1. **I** My self must shortly remove out of this House, and out of this Body, and out of this World. This Body is but a feeble Tabernacle, and must shortly be taken down. While I am in this House I am but a Tenant, at the Will of my Lord; he will quickly turn me out of Doors. He has often given me Warning to provide my self; this he has done both by the Remove of many other Tenants, before me, and round about me: And also by frequent Illness in my own Body, or in my Relations: For every Pain, every Fit of Sickness, is a new Messenger from my Lord, with fresh Warning to me to be ready, and look out for another House.

2. Do you remove, or make Alterations, because your House is too strait for you? That may be needful; but remember, that in a little while, a far less House will serve you; I mean the Grave, *the House, or Place, appointed for all that are now living.* Job xxx. 23. *I know that thou wilt bring me to Death, and to the Place appointed for all Living.*

3. Is it hard to part with good Neighbours, good Friends and Relations? Then, wherever your House is to be, take Care to gain and keep the Presence of God with you; that your House may be *Bethel, the House of GOD*; and then, if you have not many good Neighbours about you, you have his Presence who is best of all, and will *never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

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4. If your Habitation is inconvenient, on some Accounts; to make your Mind easy, you may think;

(1.) That better than I have had no certain Dwelling-Place: The Worthies, *Heb. xi.*——
Dwelt in Caves and Dens of the Earth; whose *Clothing was Sheep-skins, and Goat-skins*; of *whom the World was not worthy*. Lord, may I never be discontented with what I have, till I am better than these; and till I am poorer and more afflicted than these.

(2.) The Lord Jesus Christ, who was and is Lord of Heaven and Earth, had not a Place of his own, *where to lay his Head*. Not an House, not a Pillow: Some of you can walk, not only from one Room to another, but from one House to another, and from your own to the House of God; how thankful should you be?

(3.) You may remember also, that God has prepared a better House for his People; *2 Cor. v. 1.* *An House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*. That will be as large, and beautiful, well framed and furnished as we can desire; and placed among our best Friends, and most valuable and loving Relations; whence we shall never need, never desire to remove. *They shall go no more out.*

Seeing a Vagabond taken up, and carried before a Magistrate.

WHEN one in a Crowd had lost his Money, and knew not how, or by whom, a certain Vagabond was taken up, upon Suspicion, and strictly examined.

1. When we find our Thoughts grow vain, trifling, and wandering, take up these Vagabonds, for they have robbed us of our Treasure ; *i. e.* of our better Thoughts : Bring them upon strict Trial, ask them whence they came ? and what is their Business here ? and send them away.

2. If you have lost any of your valuable Goods ; your Evidences, your Comforts, your Peace, your spiritual Frames, look about you ; enquire who are the Thieves. Is it the World, Relations, Riches, or Honours that have stolen away your best Affections ? Beware of them.

3. When King *Uzziah* was smitten with the Leprosy, *2 Chron. xxvi.* it's said, that the *Priests thrust him out of the Temple.* They did not stand for Complements, or Manners in such a Case. And so we should do with evil Thoughts ; thrust them out of the Temple ; for the Soul and Body of every Believer is the Temple of God ; never stand to parley with them, though they may plead never so high Extraction. Thoughts foreign from our present Business, either in Prayer, or Hearing the Word of God, though they are for the Matter good, yet, if they are unseasonable, thrust them out of the Temple, for they are Vagabonds. These wandering Thoughts, in time of divine Worship, are like the Fowls that *came down upon Abraham's Sacrifice, Gen. xv. 11.* Abraham *drave them away* ; so should we. And to prevent wandering Thoughts in Time of divine Worship,

(1.) We should remember, that God is a jealous God, and his all-seeing Eye is over us. *Thou GOD seest me. GOD is great, and greatly to be feared, and to be had in Reverence of all them that draw nigh unto him, Psal. lxxxvii. 7.*

(2.) We

(2.) We should consider what we are going about. We should say to our selves, *This is for thy Life*. I am going about *a great Work*, Nehem. vi. 3.

(3.) We should think, this may be my last Opportunity, my last Prayer, the last Sermon that ever I may hear : I may never have such another Season.

(4.) That good and bad Angels stand to see how we behave our selves in the Worship of God ; the Bad, that they may hinder our Profit, and render our Minds vain ; and the good Angels, that they may assist and encourage us.

(5.) We should accustom our selves to good Thoughts at other Times, else, how can we expect to keep them close to our Work in time of Worship.

(6.) We should commit our selves and our Thoughts to the Keeping of God. So *David* did, by Prayer, *Unite my Heart* [that is, the Thoughts of my Heart] *to fear thy Name*, Psal. lxxxvi. 11.

4. Tho' we cannot keep out vain Thoughts, yet we should not give them a Lodging with us. *How long shall vain Thoughts lodge within thee ?*

If they pass thro' the House, [thy Heart] yet let them not have a Lodging in the House : Don't bid them welcome.

Paying a Visit to any Friend.

1. **A**SK GOD to go with you. Go no where, but where you may dare to ask the Presence of God, and his Care and Protection. .

2. Take care that your Speech may be grave, serious, humble, and savory; and that you may not countenance Vanity in others: That you may neither do any Hurt to, nor receive any from the Company, either in Speech or Behaviour.

3. Endeavour to spiritualize common Subjects, mentioned by others, that it may profit the Hearers: So our Lord Jesus Christ has set his Disciples an Example.

4. Begin good Discourse, as soon as you can with Prudence, before any unprofitable Talk is set on Foot: It will be more difficult to do it afterwards. But better late than not at all.

5. Fall in with any other that may begin any profitable Discourse, and do not presently drop it; for that will discourage them, and make your own Work more difficult.

6. Don't, willingly, hear Tale-bearing, Backbiting, or Defaming others. Charity teacheth us to plead the Cause of the Person spoken of, if the Case will bear it; because the Person is not present to speak for himself. A true Member of *Sion*, is such an one, *that receiveth not a Reproach against his Neighbour*, Psal. xv. 3.

At a Funeral.

THERE is hardly any Time spent to less Profit, than the Hours that are spent at a Funeral. Almost every one talking in their Turns, and but few that take Care to suit their Discourse to the present Occasion, unless it is now and then to praise the Person deceas'd; which is commonly done out of supposed good Manners.

If

If you say any thing at all, endeavour to divert the Company, not with light, idle Stories, but with something profitable, and something proper to the Occasion; otherwise we cross, and not fall in with the Providence of God. This Corps, tho' dead, yet speaketh, and God speaks to us by it, and the Living should lay it to Heart. If any ask what does it speak? It may be answer'd,

1. It speaks to all that are present, and God, that does nothing in vain, expects that we should make some profitable Improvement of the Providence. And thus should every one speak to himself.

(1.) This will be my Case shortly; I must quickly go the Way of all the Earth. Before it be long, my Body also will be a vile Body; my present Garments will be changed for a burying Suit; my Beauty turned into Ashes; my Strength into Rottenness and Corruption.

(2.) Here are Relations parted: So must I and mine shortly, tho' never so desirable, loving, and useful; and then, after the Flesh, we shall know each other no more. How should this teach us to study Faithfulness to each other in the mean while, in filling up our Relation with Duty both towards their Bodies and Souls?

(3.) Every Hour we live, we take some Steps toward our Grave, and cannot step them back again. Every Thought, every Word, every Action of Life, every Breath, every Day, every Sabbath, is one nearer to our last; and so to the Grave, and to Eternity. The Time is hastning, when it will be said to me, *Set thy House* [set thy Heart] *in order, for thou shalt die and not live.*

(4.) Every one should enquire, What Preparation have I made for my own great Change? Is

my Nature changed? Have I true Faith in Jesus Christ? Is it now my Care to abstain from Sin? Do I hate every false Way? Am I really concern'd to do the whole Will of God? Have I had any more close and serious Thoughts of my Soul, my State, and my Death, since the last Funeral?

2. This Providence speaks something to the Relations of the Deccas'd in particular.

(1.) They should consider who hath done it; *he that gave, hath now taken away*: He has an indisputable Right to us, and to all that we have; he has done it, *that is righteous in all his Ways*; he has done it, that does nothing amiss.

(2.) They should also think why he hath done it. *What hath the Lord spoken?* What Evil may be reprov'd hereby? What Sin is pointed at? What Duty has been neglected? Or what is now called for?

[1.] Had this Relation too great a Share in my Affections? So Physicians, sometimes, prescribe Bleeding in a remote Part of the Body, to prevent bleeding to Death.

[2.] Is it to teach me or mine to look after better Relations, more suitable, loving, useful, and valuable, and more worthy of my best Affections; because the Relation between God in Christ, and the believing Soul, will never be dissolved.

[3.] Is this Providence sent to teach me to mind my precious Soul more than I have formerly done? Is it a Call from Heaven, to me, or mine, to pray more frequently, and more fervently; to hear and study the Word of God more carefully; and to take care to finish my Generation-Work? Pray to him that has done it, as *Job* did under his great Losses, *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.*

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Sanctify the Breach, make it up with thy own gracious Presence. Give me Silence under thy Stroke, that I may be subject to the Father of Spirits, and live. And prepare me to follow my Relation, that I may die in the Lord, and be a Gainer by Death.

Looking through the Telescope, or Spying-glass.

1. **A**T one End, it represents distant Things, much nearer, and much plainer, than they otherwise would appear to us. What a fit Emblem is this of the very necessary and useful Grace of Faith, which is said to be *the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. Tho' Faith does not give Being to the Thing, yet it is a great Means to help us to the clearer View of it. By Faith, the Promises which may be afar off, are brought nigh, by believing the Faithfulness of God; that *he is faithful that promised*, and that *he is able also to perform*, Rom. iv. 21.

2. Looking through the other End of the Glass, which is called the wrong End, the very same Things appear as if they were much less; and a great Way farther off, than they really are. This is a fit Emblem of Unbelief; for so Unbelief does by the Threatnings, and the Promises of God. Unbelief represents the Threatnings as very little Things, and a great Way off, and therefore there is no great need to fear them. So Unbelief spake in this Manner, *Let him hasten his Work, that we may see it*. So Unbelief treats the Promises of God, *Where is the Promise of his Coming, for since the Fathers fell asleep, all Things continue*
as

as they were. Lord, increase my Faith, that I may not dishonour the faithful God, or injure my own Soul: Help my Unbelief. And when I would see the Promises clearly, help me to keep the Precepts sincerely.

Seeing some that were Foolish, and some others Distracted.

1. **O**H! How affecting is it to see Persons that are rash and inconsiderate; heady and ungovern'd; fickle and unconstant; wise in their own Conceit; choosing, acting, and speaking foolishly. Such a Sight calls for Pity from the Beholders. It is very sinful to make Sport with them; for it is the Hand of God, and might have fallen on my self, or some of mine; and then I should not have sported with it, but look'd on it as a very great Affliction. Those that have more Understanding, and abuse it, are in a worse Condition than natural Fools.

Upon a spiritual Account, this is truly the Condition of every one by Nature: Tit. iii. 3. *We our selves were sometime foolish.*

(1.) Ignorant of those Things that are most needful to be known. Ignorant of God, of Christ, of his Word and Covenant, and of our own Souls.

(2.) Un capable of learning spiritual Things. *The natural Man cannot receive the Things of the Spirit of GOD,* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(3.) Setting an high Value on Things that are of little Worth; and despising Things of greatest Moment.

If God has made us *wise to Salvation*, let us act as *Children of Wisdom.*

2. We

2. We see some distracted. A very melancholy Sight ! And their Distraction shews it self divers Ways.

(1.) Some of them fancy themselves to be rich, when they are poor : They take Sticks and Stones to be valuable Treasure. So it is on a spiritual Account, with those that are beside themselves : They think that they are rich, and encreas'd in Goods, and have need of nothing ; when they are *poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked*, Rev. iii. 17.

(2.) Some of these poor Creatures are proud of their filthy Raggs. So are some that have the Use of their Reason, proud of their *own Righteousness*, which in Scripture are stiled *filthy Raggs* ; being too short to cover the Soul, and too ragged to adorn it.

(3.) Some of these poor Creatures fancy themselves to be Kings and Princes. And so some, upon as false Grounds, fancy themselves to be *better than other Men* ; like the *Pharisee*, *GOD, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men.* [That is, not so bad as other Men.]

The Way to cure distracted Men, is, to shut them up in the Dark, to use them hardly, and keep them meanly. So does God with Men, in order to bring them to themselves. He shuts them up in Darknes for a while ; he holds them in Cords and Chains of Affliction ; he *leads them into the Wilderness*, before he *speaks comfortably to them* ; he brings them into Straits, as the Prodigal, till they are *ready to perish with Hunger*, before they *come to themselves*. O how thankful should we be for the Use of our Reason, it is not in our own keeping. The very afflictive Case of others, might have been our own, or our nearest Relations :

We

We might have been Laughing-stocks to others; unfit for worldly Business; unfit to converse with Men; a great Burden and Affliction to our Friends. Let us also think, how much like mad Men those speak and act, that give Way to their unruly Passion. Passion is a short Madness. He that has no Rule over his Passion, is like a City without Walls: Many Enemies may easily find Entrance into an Heart that is unguarded and ungovern'd.

The SUN-DIAL.

1. **S**O our precious Time slides away, like the Shadow, whether we improve it well or not, whether we work or play: And every Hour is one nearer to Death, and Judgment, and Eternity.

2. No Time of the Day can be seen by the Dyal, without the Sun, the Hand, [or Style] and the Figures. As the Figures stand on the Dyal, so do the Promises stand in the *Book of GOD*: But there is no seeing them, as ours, or taking any Comfort from them, without a Ray and Hand from Heaven, to direct us. *In thy Light we see Light*, Psal. xxxvi. 9.

3. We often look on the Dyal, and can see no Time of Day by it; but even then we do not throw away the Dyal, for we hope it may be useful again when the Sun shines: So when we can have no Comfort from the Promises, we must not throw them away. The Sun may shine again, and shew us what Time of the Day it is with us. *Cast not away your Confidence, which hath a great Recompence of Reward*, Heb. x. 35.

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Thoughts on seeing a demolish'd Castle.

1. **A**S this Palace, or Castle now lies in Ruins, it is an Emblem of our Nature, as it is now destroy'd by Sin. The very Ruins of this Place, shew that it was once a very famous Building: So the very Ruins of our Nature shew, that it was once a very noble Building of God.

2. As this Place now lies desolate, it is an Emblem of this World, in a little while, to be empty'd and unpeopled, and drain'd of all its Inhabitants.

3. How vain is all the Glory and Grandeur of this World. This Place was once the Resort of Princes and Nobles, but now it lies in Ruins.

4. Where are now the Great Men, that once inhabited or resorted to this Place, such as were here merrily, as well as nobly entertain'd? What is their Work, and what their Entertainments in the other World? Are they *singing* there, or *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of Teeth*?

5. How happy are they that have an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, that never decays, or waxeth old; that Time shall not demolish, nor Envy over-turn! Every true Believer may say, *We have an House in Heaven*, 2 Cor. v. 1.

6. These Ruins may bring to our Remembrance, what God does for every Soul that he brings to Salvation. When God brings home his Word, with Power, on the Soul, he pulleth down the strong Holds. 2 Cor. x. 4. *The Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through GOD, to the pulling down of strong Holds; casting*

casting down Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of GOD, and bringing into Captivity every Thought, to the Obedience of Christ. Those Things that make the Heart of Man to be a strong Hold, and which God casts down, when the strong Man armed is dispossess'd; are, Man's Ignorance and Darknes, his Unbelief, the Love and Reign of Sin, his Prejudices against the Word and Ways of God; the Hardness and Deceitfulness of his Heart, the Pride and Rebellion of his Will; an high Conceit of its own Goodness, and a Trust in its own Performances. These are the strong Holds, and must all be pull'd down, in order to erect a better Building; that is, a spiritual House.

7. How wonderful is the Wisdom and Power of God manifested, in that he erects a most noble Building [a spiritual House] out of the Ruins of the old one; and makes it a Palace for the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. A Temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; consisting of lively precious Stones, polish'd and brighten'd with the Grace of God, and founded on the Rock Jesus Christ, the Foundation and Corner-stone. Therefore the Powers of Hell shall never be able to throw it down.

Upon Seeing another Man's great House, and Estate.

1. **N**EVER grudge it to the Owner; for,
(1.) It is that which God has put into his Hands, who is Lord of Heaven and Earth; and who may say unto him, *What dost thou?*

(2.) This may be all the Good that he hath; and if so, then the meanest and poorest Believer is richer than he. A Child of God may say, *I would*
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not change my Estate for his, if he had a thousand Times more than he hath. He is Possessor of a few Fields, but I am Heir of a Kingdom.

(3.) What might I have been, or what might I have done, or how might I have lived, if I had been the Owner of this Estate : For my Heart was no better, by Nature, than others, who abuse what they possess, upon their Lusts.

(4.) I have wanted nothing hitherto, tho' I have not so much as some others have ; yet I have whatever the wise Disposer of all Things thinks good for me. And I have more than many have that are better than my self, and more than I deserve, or well improve.

(5.) I have a better House, and a better Estate than this is ; I have Grace in Possession, and Glory in the Promise ; and in the Beginning and Earnest, I have the Covenant of Grace : I have God in Christ, for my Portion and Inheritance. *I have an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. I have a goodly Heritage.*

A Turn or two in the Garden.

1. **O**F the Trees : Some are always green, but bear no Fruit. These are like some Professors, that bear no good Fruits of Grace ; these may make a Shew in the Garden of the Church, but are of little Service. True Believers are ever compar'd, in Scripture, to Fruit-Trees ; as the Vine and the Fig-tree.

Among the Fruit-trees, observe,

(1.) It is strange that one little Graft, or little Bud, shall *change the Nature of the Stock and Fruit.* The Tree, thenceforth, bears Fruit, ac-

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cording

cording to the Nature of the Bud, not of the old Stock : So it is in Grace.

(2.) Below the Graft or Bud, [if the Branches are suffer'd to grow there] the Stock will put forth its Crabs still. There is corrupt Nature remaining in those that are *engrafted into Jesus Christ*, tho' they have a new Principle of Grace, to carry the whole Man out to *Fruits of Holiness*. None bear good Fruit, till they are engrafted into Jesus Christ, by Faith. All that the old Stock brings forth are but wild Grapes. We have an old Stock, that will be putting forth its Suckers still ; but these must be lopp'd off, that the Tree may bring forth *more good Fruit*.

In the Work of Grace, there is something,

[1.] Very unlike the Art of Grafting : In Naturals, the Root is bad, and the Graft, or Bud is better : But in Grace, it is the Stock that mends the Graft. It is Jesus Christ that makes the Soul good, so they are *grafted into him contrary to Nature* ; for the Branch of the Wild Olive is grafted into the Good Olive Tree. Men do not put a bad Graft into a good Stock ; but God does so, *Rom. xi. 24.*

[2.] There is something like the Art of Grafting, in what God does for every saved Soul. Their Soul, or their Heart is the old Stock ; the Grace of God is the Graft, or Bud, that is ingrafted into it. Grace, at first, may be but like a little Bud ; and for a while, the Possessor may hardly perceive whether the Bud is alive or not : But he that set it there, will keep it alive, and make it fruitful.

(3.) The Trees that are design'd for Fruit, must be set in a proper Place ; not in the open Field, but in the Garden or Orchard. Some take care of their Plant of Grace, but do not add themselves

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to the Church : There is the Care of the Dresser of the Vineyard, and there are the Dews and Waterings of Heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ is the true Vine, the common Stock, in which all true Believers, as Branches, meet : He gives them Life and Nourishment. The Church of true Believers is also a Vine : God planted it, he also props it up by his Spirit, and by the Staff of the Promises, or it would fall to the Ground. God prunes it, and cuts off its useless Branches ; as Pride, Passion, Covetousness, Discontent, &c. And he *waters it, and watches over it Night and Day, lest any hurt it*, Isai. xxvii. 3.

(4.) We behold with Pleasure, how the Fruit-trees are sometimes fill'd with Blossoms ; and we are ready to hope for Fruit, but are often disappointed of our Expectations ; for the Blossoms fall off, and some that were set for Fruit, afterwards meet with a Blast, and they perish too. We see, and hear of some young Ones under hopeful Convictions, and we are glad of it ; but the pleasing Blossoms fall off, and the Fruit never comes to Perfection : Yet we go on to water, prune, and dress our Vines. And so we should in Prayer, and in necessary Advice, joined with a holy Conversation ; looking up to God, for his special Influences from Heaven : And hoping for Fruit in Season, though we must wait a while for it.

2. Of Flowers : It is wonderful what a Variety there is both as to Kind and Colour, and how many Colours grow out of the same green Stalk. Why are not the Leaves of the same curious Colours with the Flowers, or the Flowers all Green as well as the Leaves ? But so the God of Nature has order'd it, and Man cannot alter the Course of Nature. Some in the Garden, both of Trees and

Flowers, are chosen by the Holy Ghost, to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ; as the Vine, the Apple-tree, the Rose, the Lilly.

Among the Flowers observe,

(1.) That some of our best Flowers have their Runners, Slips that degenerate from the old Stock; and many times these are of a worse Colour than others that never came from a good Stock. So it is when the Children of good Parents degenerate, they commonly prove worse than others.

(2.) Many that are very fine Flowers, in the Garden, to look upon, yet are neither good for Food nor Physick: Like some Men, eminent for Learning, and Parts, and Estates, but do little Good in their Generation: They are like some beautiful Flowers that make a fine Shew, but have neither Smell nor Taste; no Charity, no Virtues, no Religion, at least no Power of it.

(3.) One Plant flowers in one Month, and another flowers in another Month, as they have their appointed Seasons throughout the Summer; that we may never want a Season wherein to behold the Power and Wisdom of God, and to shew us, that Christians should always be bringing forth good Fruit; as Jesus Christ is compar'd to a Tree that *yields his Fruit every Month*, Rev. xxii. 2.

3. Seeing the great Variety of Fruits, and each of them good in their Kind. There is a great deal of Difference in the Size and Fairness of Fruit on the same Tree. One Professor must not despise another, if they are not exactly of the same Size with themselves.

4. When we see Children greedy after unripe Fruit, we may think how Christians do by the Promises; they can hardly stay till the Fruit is ripe. The *Vision* is for an appointed Time, and God's Time

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Time is best : There is the Time of the Promise. All Fruit is not ripe at the same Time ; neither are the Promises. All Fruit is best in its own proper Season : It is sweetest when ripe.

5. When we are eating pleasant Fruit, let it remind us of the Churches inviting Jesus Christ, her best Friend, to eat of his pleasant Fruit : *Let my Beloved come into his Garden, and eat of his pleasant Fruit.* Grace, and the Exercise of it, are pleasant Fruits ; so to the Soul it self, and so to Jesus Christ. If we partake of them, they are ours ; as they come from him, so they are his. Every Plant of Righteousness is his own. Faith, and Love, and Repentance, and spiritual Joy, and Peace in believing, are pleasant Fruits. And all the Promises of God, and Answers of Prayer, are his pleasant Fruits.

6. Here I see the Weeds grow naturally, without, nay, against all our Care to keep them down. We pluck them up, and they grow again. So will Corruptions do : We need to weed again, where we seem'd to make clean Work a few Days since ; and these grow faster, sometimes, than the valuable Plants we take Care of.

7. Here is a Place of Pleasure, an Emblem of Paradise. Here I may bring to Remembrance these profitable Lessons ;

(1.) Such a Place it was, wherein our first Parents ruin'd themselves, and all their Posterity. Satan may be watching for me, while I am taking my Pleasure here. I may be in Danger, while I am taking my lawful Pleasure.

(2.) In such a Place did our Lord Jesus begin his bloody Passion. In the Garden he lay prostrate on the Ground, in an Agony, and sweat *great Drops of Blood.* Are you merry in the Garden?

Jesus Christ was *exceeding sorrowful*, even to Death. Do you cool your selves in the Summer-House, or Arbour? Jesus Christ was scorched with the Wrath of God.

8. When you look on Flowers and Fruits, ask, What good Fruit do I bear? Am I a barren or a fruitful Tree? I am not willing to let a barren Tree stand in my Garden. What a Wonder is it that God does not give Command to cut down every barren Tree!

Gleaners in the Harvest-Field.

1. **THESE** are an Emblem of true Christians. While they read, and hear, and pray, and converse with other Christians, they are Gleaners. They endeavour to pick up something for Food; not Straw, not Stubble, but good Corn; *i. e.* sound Doctrine, and good Experience.

2. Christians do but glean at present: They also shall have an Harvest of Grace and Joy in due Time; but at present they have but Gleanings of Grace, here a little, and there a little.

3. God will deal with every gracious Soul, as Boaz did by Ruth; he will first give them Gleanings, he will let fall now and then an Handful, and they must take Pains to gather it up; then he will take them to his Table, cause them to dwell in his House, and bring them to his eternal Embraces.

Looking into a Prison.

1. **THIS** is properly a *Den of Thieves*. Why did not God suffer me to run the same evil Course? O how rich is divine Grace, in turning my

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my Heart from such a Den of Wickedness, and making it a Temple for the Holy Ghost!

2. What an Emblem is here of a graceless Heart, where is nothing but Corruption, no Principle of Grace: This is a Picture of what I was by Nature. *Such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our GOD,* 1 Cor. vi. 11. And such was I my self; the Seeds of all Evil were in my Heart.

3. Some of these are Debtors; they are Bankrupts, they owe more than they are able to pay; and some of these are Malefactors, that have broken the good and wholesome Laws of the Land. I was both deeply in Debt to divine Justice, and had nothing to pay my Debts with, and might have been cast into Prison. And I had also broken the holy, just, and good Laws of God: I was a Traytor against the King of Heaven, but the *King of Israel is a merciful King*, and he frankly forgave me all. O that I might never break his Laws again, but love, and honour, and serve him and his Interest, all my Days.

4. What an Affliction would it be, if I should be confin'd to the Company of these Prisoners. Then I thought of the *Psalmist's Prayer*; *O gather not my Soul with Sinners. I cannot bear them that are evil now*, and how should I bear with their Company for ever! May my Heart be always inclin'd to pity and pray for poor Prisoners in Chains; and live in holy, humble Admiration of Free-Grace, that made a Difference between me and them, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

Sitting

Sitting by the Fire.

1. **T**HIS is a very wonderful Creature; it is hard to define it, or say what it is! It is Light, it is Red, it is Heat, but it is no Substance; for take away the Fuel and it is nothing. *Where no Wood is, the Fire goeth out; and where no Tale-bearer is, the Strife ceaseth. As Coals are to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire; so is a contentious Man to kindle Strife,* Prov. xxvi. 20, 21.

2. This Fire often goes out, but there is a Fire that shall never go out; that shall *never be quenched,* Mark ix. 43.

3. When the Fire is gone out, it is restor'd by striking with Flint and Steel: So passionate Persons jarring and clashing one against another, kindle a new Fire of Contention. This Way of restoring Fire, striking on burnt Rags, or Shavings, may be a fit Emblem of Satan's Temptations taking Fire on our Corruptions: The Sparks of Temptations would not take Fire without them.

4. This Fire must be often blown; but there is a destroying Fire not blown. *Isa. xxx. 33. Tophet is ordain'd of old. The Breath of the Lord, as a Flame of Fire and Brimstone, doth kindle it.*

5. This is a necessary Means to refine Mettals from their Dross; and so it is an Emblem of the Spirit's Work of Sanctification, who is therefore called *the Spirit of Judgment and of Burning:* As he purgeth out the Dross of Corruption from his People. And so shall every Man's Work be try'd, of what Sort it is. 1 Cor. iii. 13. *The Fire shall try every Man's Work.*

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6. The Fire is, in Scripture, put for great Afflictions. *When thou passest through the Fire, I will be with thee.* This was literally made good to the Worthies, *Dan. iii. 27.* and to many others. And shall have their spiritual Fulfilment in every Age to the People of God. *Isa. xliii. 2.* *When thou walkest through the Fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the Flames kindle upon thee.*

7. This is a very useful Creature; but what a surprizing, frightful, hurtful Thing is it, when it gets the Mastery! Then it may, especially, put us in mind of the Coming of Christ, and the awful Conflagration at the End of the World, *2 Thess. i. 8.* *Christ Jesus shall be revealed in flaming Fire from Heaven, taking Vengeance on them that know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel.* *2 Pet. iii. 12.* *Looking for, and hasting unto the Coming of the Day of GOD; wherein the Heavens, being on fire, shall be burnt up, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat.*

8. While we are sitting by our common Fire, this is one of the Places, where GOD has commanded every one of us to talk of GOD, and of his Word and Works, *when thou sittest in thy House.*

The Battle improv'd: Or, the Mischief of Carnal Contentions. From two accidental Sights.

The one, of two Weasels fighting so furiously, that both were taken up and kill'd, by one that stood by looking on the Battle. The other, of two little Fowls, who from feeding, went to fighting: An Hawk snatch'd away one, the other ran to his Company. Which occasion'd such Thoughts as these.

1. **W**HAT an Emblem is here of the Mischief of Carnal Contentions, either of Christians, or of Relations, or of Members of the same Family, Brethren and Sisters! How unnatural is it, that those should fall out, whom God has knit so close together in the Bonds of Nature. These ought to unite in Love, against the common Enemy: These should *dwell together in Unity*, Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

2. How dangerous is it for those to fall out who are Members of the same Family. *An House divided against it self cannot stand.* Thus they weaken their own Hands, and at the same time, expose themselves to greater Danger by the common Enemy. Satan, as a Beast, or Bird of Prey, waits for them; *Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as Wheat*; and he waits to take you at a Disadvantage. Passion and Revenge cannot be pursu'd, without great Danger and Hazard to our selves. Men differing, should yield one to the other, even for their own Good, if not for the Benefit of the other. Too often passionate Men, rather than yield one to the other, have both been taken in the Snare of the common Enemy of Souls.

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3. Oftentimes, the more Peace without, the more Division within. When the Shepherds Dogs are kept in, the wanton Sheep and Lambs shew their Passion in butting each other. The *Jews*, in *Jerusalem*, held together, while their common Enemies were at their Gates; but when the Enemy was withdrawn, they fought one against another within the City. How just is it for the Lord of Hosts to find carnal Christians something else to do. How just, if the Shepherd should let out his Dogs again, [Informers and Persecutors] to drive the Sheep together, and to teach them to love one another. The Time shall come [for God has spoken it] when the Lyon and the Leopard, Beasts of Prey, *shall lie down with the Lamb*. Proud, passionate Men shall become humble, peaceable Christians. The more Pride and Self-love, the more Contention; and the more Humility, the more Peace.

4. No Wonder if Christians differ sometimes; for Satan, *the Accuser of the Brethren*, is watching continually, to sow Discord among them, and to throw Stumbling Blocks in their Way: Therefore these should *watch and pray, lest they enter into Temptation*, Matt. xxvi. 41.

5. Allowance should be made, by each other, for human Infirmities; tho' we must not call our Sins by the Name of Weakness and Infirmities, and so wipe our Mouths. Men differ in their Stature, their Apprehensions, their natural Tempers; in their Faces, and their Voices; and yet they are but Men: So may those be good Christians that differ in little Matters. Men may be going to the same Place, that do not walk just in the same Path. Two Men may finish their Work well, that may not carry it on exactly the same Way.

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You cannot single out a Family, wherein all the Children are of the same Stature, Favour or Temper; yet they are Brethren and Sisters. It is Pity that such should fall out by the Way.

6. I once saw a very lively and teaching Picture, of a poor, peevish, inconsiderate Person; and at the same time an Instance of a steady noble Mind: It was in the Den of Lyons. The Keeper threw in a little Piece of Meat into the Den, [observe, that it is about little Matters that Differences commonly arise] the Lyon being nearest to the Bit of Meat, first seiz'd it, and devour'd it; but the little Dog that liv'd with him in the Den, being angry that he miss'd of his Prey, flew at the Lyon in a great Passion, caught him by the Nose, and shook him till his Passion was abated: But the Lyon took no Notice of the Affront. Noble Souls will pass over many Offences, and consider it as a little Act, inconsiderately done, and all that could be expected from a little Soul. It is too mean a Thing for noble Christians to be offended at every little Trifle. *Satis est prostrasse Leoni*: The Lyon spares the Humble. So does the Lord Jesus Christ true Penitents; go and do thou likewise.

Thoughts occasion'd by seeing a Lark mounting up, and singing.

1. **I**T is wonderful how long they continue their sweet Notes, without any sensible Intermission; wherein we can suppose they may take Breath. O that my Soul could mount up, with united and engaged Affections, Desires, and Delight towards Heaven, and be unwearied in the Service of God. *Unite my Heart to fear thy Name, Psal. lxxxvi. 11.*

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2. It is wonderful what a great Variety of charming Notes Nature has taught them, not to be equal'd by Man. So Grace has taught the People of God to pray and praise with a Frame of Heart, not to be equal'd by graceless Persons.

3. Melancholy Christians, are like those Birds that have no pleasant Notes. But if they cannot sing [*of the Mercies of the Lord*] they should mourn as a Dove in Prayer, and chatter as a Crane, or a Swallow, confessing and bewailing Sin. They should pray for more Grace, and for the Evidence of it ; and be much concern'd to keep close to the Way of their Duty, and not be slothful in it : Be thankful for what they have, and use it well. *To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly,* Matt. xxv. 29.

4. Not the biggest or finest Birds are the best Singers ; many of them make no Musick. Many great Persons make no Musick in Religion : God and their Generation are little serv'd by them. Tho' I am one of the least and meanest, and there is little promising in me, yet may God, and Heaven, and true Religion, have my Heart, and Breath, and Strength, unwearied in his Service.

5. May these chearful Creatures put me daily in mind of my Duty : Never to pass one Day, without Prayer for necessary Mercies ; and without Praise to God for Life, Health, Strength, and Peace ; and for the Exercise of Reason, and for the Gospel, and all other Favours I enjoy, *Psal. ciii. 1, 2.*

6. When this little Creature had ended its Sonnet, it made haste to the Earth, like a Dart, and there was silent. When my Soul has been on the Wing, in Prayer or Praise, or in Hearing the Word ; O may I not make too much Haste again to the Earth, but keep a Savour of divine Things upon my
O Heart.

Heart. Tho' my Tongue has done speaking, or my Ear done hearing, then may my Heart be kept warm, by holy Meditation, and Christian Conference.

Of Carnal Mirth.

Ecclef. ii. 2. *I said of Laughter, it is mad ; and of Folly, What doth it ?*

HERE we are told, that *carnal Mirth is Folly*; and those that delight in it, are called to give themselves so much time, as to consider what they are doing. *What doth it ?* That is, either, what Good doth it ? where is the Pleasure or Profit of it ? Or, *what doth it ?* That is, what Evil and Mischief doth it ? It renders the Mind vain, sets an evil Example before others, and utterly unfits any for religious Duties.

1. Can it be suppos'd, that the reasonable Creature Man was made for this End ? And can any think, that God has entrusted him with his Talent of precious Time, so to trifle it away ? And is he entrusted with such noble Powers, to live such a vain Life ?

2. Should Man, who was made to glorify God, spend his Days in carnal Mirth, when in a Moment he may go down to the Dead ! What if you should quickly go to the Grave, would not your *Laughter be turned into Mourning, and your Joy into Heaviness*.

3. If you are thus merry, on every little trifling Occurrence, when is it that you take time to think of your Souls, and what Condition they are in ? When do you think of your Sins, to confess them before God in Prayer ; and that you may be saved from

from the Temptations of the Enemy of Souls? Can you be serious in Worship, if you are so light and vain at other Times?

4. Is this merry Life, indeed, the Way to Heaven? Can this be the Way to give up *Accounts with Joy and not with Grief*? Will this do when you come upon your Death-Bed? Will you then be vain or serious, in jest or in earnest?

5. If our Lord Jesus Christ should come, and find you thus employ'd, what think you, would he say to you, *well done good and faithful Servant*? Is this to be so doing, as your Lord has appointed you?

6. May not many that were carried away with carnal Mirth last Year be now in Eternity, *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth*? Fruitlessly wishing that they had spent their Time better: *Not as Fools, but as Wise, redeeming the Time*, Eph. v. 15, 16.

7. How may those live in holy Admiration of divine Grace, who are now made serious! These have new Matter of Joy; God is become their Salvation; their Sins are forgiven them, and Matters are well settled between God and their Souls. And they have also new Springs to their spiritual Joy, even the Grace of God in their Hearts, and a comfortable Sense of his Love to their Souls.

8. O may I remember my former vain Life, as long as I have a Day to live; and be humbled at every Remembrance thereof. And henceforth *re-joyce in the Lord, and joy in the GOD of my Salvation*; that there may be a good Measure of godly Sorrow, and spiritual Joy in my Heart; that my Speech may be serious and savory, my Duties delightful, my Conversation steady, and ornamental to Religion; and exemplary to those about me.

Upon seeing the Hospital of Sick and Wounded.

HERE are some Blind, some Lame, some Wither'd, some Deaf, some full of Sores; some with their Limbs shot off; others with their Limbs cut off; others weeping at the Approach of the fatal Hour, when they expect to undergo the same painful, dangerous Operation. This was a very melancholy Sight, calling for the Pity and Prayers of others for them. This Sight occasion'd these Thoughts:

1. What Reason have I to admire the Goodness of God, I am not one of these miserable Creatures! That these are not my Children, or Relations, whom I might pity and pray for, and weep over, but not be able to help or heal.

2. Here I see that my Afflictions have not only been *less than mine Iniquities have deserved*, but much less than many of my Fellow-Creatures undergo. Why does God deal with me and mine with a more gentle Hand!

3. This House [this Hospital] is an Epitome of this whole World, which is but an Hospital of sick and wounded Souls. And what a Mercy would it be, if diseased Souls were as sensible of their Diseases, and as desirous of being heal'd, as these poor Men and Women are.

4. Here is a Glass for me to look into, and remember what I my self was by Nature. All these Calamities meeting together in one Body, would be the Picture of my Nature, on a spiritual Account.

(1.) I was Blind, born so; I had *Eyes but saw not*, I was ignorant of God, and of Jesus Christ; and as ignorant of my self, of the State and Danger
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of my Soul, and of God's Way of Salvation for Sinners; and of my own need of Help, Pardon, Healing, and Holiness from Jesus Christ.

(2.) I was deaf to the Calls of God, by his Word and Providences; unwilling to learn the Will of God, and had less Mind to do it.

(3.) I was as loathsom a Creature as ever mov'd upon the Face of the Earth. Nothing but Guilt and Filthiness thro' my whole Nature: From the *Sole of the Foot to the Head, nothing but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores.*

5. What need have all of us to look after the Help of Jesus Christ, and the healing and cleansing Virtue of his Blood, who is the *great Physician of Souls!* Mat. ix. 12. *The Whole need not the Physician, but those that are sick.* [Those only will look after Jesus Christ, that are sensible of their Diseases.]

6. We have greater Encouragements to put ourselves under the Care of Jesus Christ, than these poor Creatures ever had to commit themselves to the Care of these understanding Men.

(1.) There is none so skilful as Jesus Christ; he never mistakes the Case, he never makes any Misapplications.

(2.) We may have very easy Access to him, *Whosoever will may come*; and Souls need not wait long for Audience and Admission: He takes them under his Care immediately, as soon as ever they desire it. The great Multitude of those that come to Christ for Healing, are no Hindrance to each other; his Hospital has always Room for others. At the Pool of *Bethesda*, one hindred another. *John v. 7. When I would be put into the Pool, saith the poor impotent Man, another stoppeth down before me.* But Christ can heal Thousands as easy as one.

(3.) Jesus Christ is a most tender Physician ; he will put the Soul to no more Pain than is really needful. 1 Pet. i. 6. *If need be, ye are in Heaviness. He healeth the broken hearted, and bindeth up their Wounds,* Psal. cxlvii. 3. If he lays them open, at any time, it is with a Design to make a sound Cure : If he wounds, he also heals, Deut. xxxii. 39.

(4.) He is very successful in whatever he undertakes, none miscarry under his Hands : Many die in our Hospitals, and many are sent away as incurable : But Jesus Christ makes a perfect Cure. It is said, in the Days of his Ministry on Earth, of the Abundance of Blind, Lame, and Lepers, &c. that came to him for Help, *That he healed them all,* Matt. xii. 15.

(5.) The Lord Jesus Christ does all this freely ; *Without Money and without Price,* Isa. lv. 1. And it is well for us that he gives and does all freely : For what Price could be set upon the Cure of all the Soul's Diseases ! And the great Physician of Souls has no need of our Returns. So much the more is his Grace to be admir'd, that he gives the most valuable Blessings to those who are no way profitable to him.

7. What a mighty Change does the Grace of God make upon every saved Soul ! *The Blind see, the Deaf hear, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Dead are raised to Life,* Matt. xi. 5.

8. If God has healed my Diseases, which I had contracted By Sin, and which none else could have cured,

(1.) How thankful should I be to him that perform'd the Cure. Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy*

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Name: Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits: Who pardoneth thine Iniquities, and healeth all thy Diseases.

(2.) How careful should I be not to contract fresh Diseases, or wound my self again by Sin. I should stand at a Distance from all Infection, and abstain from all Appearance of Evil, 1 Theff. v. 22.

(3.) What Care should I take, to commend the Skill, the Tendernefs, and Grace of Jesus Christ unto others, that need his Help as well as I.

Upon a Neighbour's boasting of his Riches.

1. **A**RE they well gotten? Or heap'd together in a Way of Sin? Has not God been robb'd by thee, and thy Soul neglected, while thou hast been searching after them?

2. Where does thy Estate lie, in Heaven or Earth? If on Earth only, thou art but a poor Man; the least and meanest of the Family of God, has a better Estate than you have: These are *poor in this World, but rich in Faith, and Heirs of a Kingdom*, James ii. 5.

3. What do thy Riches consist of? Gold, and Silver, those perishing Things; or of Grace, the durable Riches? Do you make Gold your Hope? Or do you *choose the good Part that shall never be taken away*, Luke x. 42.

4. How large is thy Estate? Is it a little Spot upon Earth, or is it all that Heaven and Earth contain? If thy Estate does not include *GOD and his Perfections, Christ and his Fulness, the Covenant of Grace, and its great and precious Promises*, it is hardly worth the boasting of; for it is too short to render the Possessor happy.

5. Do

5. Do you esteem your self rich? But what if you are mistaken in your Account? Some have thought so, that have been found to be poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Henceforth, never think how much Gold, but how much Grace, how much spiritual and never failing Treasure? How rich towards GOD?

6. Do you reckon your self rich? Why, the Treasure is none of your own. You are but a Steward, the Owner will call for it out of thy Hands shortly. Should a Steward count himself rich, because he has, at present, much of his Lord's Goods in his Hands? But, he should rather consider,

(1.) The more I have in Hand, the greater Account I have to give. Shortly it will be said to me, *Give an Account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer Steward.* Look to it, therefore, that you *do not waste your Lord's Goods,* Luke xvi. 1.

(2.) Have a Care of Pride, and *trusting in uncertain Riches,* 1 Tim. vi. 17. These are unstable, unconstant, deceitful Riches: But trust *in the living GOD.*

(3.) See to it that you are *rich in good Works,* 1 Tim. vi. 18. Never think how much you have, but also think how much good you do with it. You live the higher, and more plentifully; but do you live the better? You lay out the more for furnishing the House, and the more for Food and Clothing; but how much in Acts of Charity? Is the Household of Faith the better for you?

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Upon seeing one drunk, such Thoughts occurred.

1. **T**HERE's one that is a Shame to Mankind, *viler than the Beasts that perish*: He is more like a Swine, than a reasonable Creature. In the Shape of a Man, but not wise and prudent enough to use the good Creatures, so as not to abuse them. God has given them for the Use of Man, to strengthen him for, and encourage him to do his Work; not to abuse them upon his Lusts.

2. There's an Atheist, that lives as if there was no God, no Heaven, no Hell, no Soul, no future State, no Judgment to come! *Psal. xiv. 1.*

3. There's an Heathen, not a Christian: For how can such an one hear the Word, where his Sin is plainly condemned; he must needs dislike the Word? And how can such an one pray? If he prays not at all, then he is an Heathen; and if he does pray, and yet live in, and allows of Sin, that's Hypocrisy.

4. There's one that's good for nothing: He is an Enemy to his Family, an Enemy to the whole Town, by his evil Example; an Enemy to his own Soul, and an Enemy to Religion.

5. There's a Captive to Sin and Satan, a poor Prisoner and Slave in Chains, *led Captive by the Devil at his Will*. There's a poor Wretch going to Execution.

6. Are some easily overcome with a little strong Liquor? Then they had need to be the more watchful, and should pray to be kept from Temptation; and industriously avoid ensnaring Company.

7. Are any mighty to drink strong Drink, or any other Liquors? That's their Shame, not their Virtue,

tue, but their Sin ; for this Habit was not acquir'd all at once, but by evil Custom : He that is the greatest Artist at Sin, is the vilest Man. Once, at the Funeral of a great Drinker, one said of him, *That he was the best to carry his Beer that ever he knew* ; another that was present, answered him, *I wonder, Sir, that you should advance such a Thing, with a Design to commend the Deceas'd ; had you been about to praise a Brewer's Horse, or his Porter, you had been nearer the Matter.* He that is the greatest Bungler at Sin, is truly the best Man.

8. While we abhor such a swinish Practice, let us ask our selves, Am I not too often drunk with Pride, or with Passion, or with Self-Conceit, or with immoderate Cares of this Life ? Or, with Discontent, and Murmuring at God's Providences ? For, these are *Soul-Drunkennes*s, Luke xxi. 34. They as much unfit the Soul for its Work, as the other indisposes the Body.

9. Such an one, I my self might have been : We were both the same by Nature. I might have been left to act like a Fool, or like a mad Man, as Drunkards often do. O that I could more admire distinguishing Grace, that has made a Difference. And may I ever feel an hearty Sorrow for the Practice and Danger of such poor Souls, and a Readiness to pity and pray for them ; while others make themselves merry with them. That some do so, is too manifest ; but no wise Man can love, or make a Mock or Sport of Sin. Can a Man laugh to see another going to Execution ? Or to see one running into everlasting Burnings ? Can they laugh when God is dishonour'd ? And when his Laws are broken ? Rather we should weep, as *David* did ; *Rivers of Water run down mine Eyes, because Men make void thy Laws*, Psal. cxix. 136.

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How to make our Visit to the Sick profitable.

1. **I**F you visit the Sick, that's a very kind Office done to their Body. That's the Office of a kind Neighbour, but not enough for a Christian: Such should shew their Love to Souls too, as knowing something of the Worth of them.

2. Enquire how it stands between God and their Souls? Are they sick with an humbling Sense of their Sins? These are the Cause of every Disease, and every Pain. Do they bewail the Vanity of their past Life, their Commission of Sin, or their Neglect of Duty? Are they sensible of their present Wants, their need of Pardon of Sin, and of Sanctification? That's the *Healing of Soul-Diseases*, Psal. ciii. 2. It's an easier Thing to be sensible of Pain, or Sicknes of the Body, and fainting of the Spirits, than to be sensible of the Wants and Disorders of the Soul. Ask them, whether they desire to be sanctified? Not, whether they are willing to go to Heaven when they die? But whether they hate Sin now?

3. While they prudently seek the best Help they can for their Bodies, and are speedy in it too; enquire whether *they look to Jesus Christ, the great Physician for their Souls*? Endeavour to shew them the Necessity of it, who and what Jesus Christ is; and what he can do for needy Souls: How skilful he is, and able to save; how ready and willing to help; how successful he is in all Diseases: He heals every Soul that heartily applies to him for Help; and he does all freely.

4. Ask them whether they us'd to pray in time of Health? Whether, then, they confess'd Sin, and watch'd against, and laboured to abstain from it?

it? Or, whether their present Trouble for Sin arose from a Sense of their present Danger of Death?

5. Ask whether they now rest upon their Confessions, and Prayers, and Duties, and Promises, and their Hope of Heaven? Or, whether God has shewn them a more excellent Way? To count themselves unprofitable Servants after Duties done and to rest their Souls upon the Righteousness of Jesus Christ.

6. Enquire, whether they understand what Faith in Jesus Christ is? And what Believing is necessary to Salvation? Ask them what true Repentance is? Whether they hate all Sin? Whether they can make out, that God has changed their Hearts?

7. Enquire whether they are now willing to give up themselves to the Lord, and to rest upon the Merits of Jesus Christ alone, for Pardon and Salvation; and to submit to the Laws and Government of Jesus Christ, as a Prince, as well as a Saviour?

8. Advise them, also, to give their Relations the best Counsel they can for their Souls: Their Advice may have better Effect on them at such a time, than at another.

9. Endeavour to shew them the Ends of God in Afflictions. To humble them for Sin, to make Sin bitter; to provoke to fervent Prayer, to teach us to improve precious Time better; to shew the Frailty of Nature, and to remind us of Death; which is hastning to us, or we to that: And also to bring to our Remembrance, with all Seriousness what will be after Death.

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The King's gracious Offer of Pardon abused.

SEveral Persons having been examin'd before the King, and found guilty of high Treason, the merciful King offer'd one of them a free Pardon, if he would but ingeniously acknowledge his Fact. The Traytor still deny'd it. But the King bid him consider the Matter well, and have Compassion on himself and his Family, by making an open Confession: And added, *I once more offer you my gracious Pardon.* But the Traytor still denying the Fact, the King took a Letter out of his Pocket, written with the Traytor's own Hand, which had been intercepted; and then it was too late to ask for Mercy.

1. So Sinners cover their Sins as long as they can, but their Sins will find them out; *He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper.*

2. Impenitent Sinners will be accessary to their own Death. God has said to them, *Why will ye die?* He has offer'd a free Pardon in the Gospel, and that often, through Jesus Christ and his Righteousness, to every one that believes and repents: And has said, *That whoso confesseth and forsaketh his Sins shall find Mercy,* Prov. xxviii. 13.

3. Tho' no Man comes short of Heaven, without his own Fault, as he chooseth Sin, and lives and dies in Impenitency; yet none obtain Salvation, but by Free Grace. *Rom. vi. 23. The Wages of Sin is Death, but the Gift of GOD is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

4. God's Pardon is ready and free for every returning Sinner. Is it not then an Aggravation of their Folly, Stubbornness, and Rebellion, that they will not confess and forsake their Sin? If

Man was but brought to say, with Grief of Heart, *I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee,* Luke xv. 18. *I have perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not ;* then the merciful God, in Christ, *would deliver him from going down to the Pit,* Job xxxiii. 27. God has said to the Sinner, *Only acknowledge thine Iniquity,* Jer. iii. 13. And others have try'd, and found that God is *gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive,* Psal. xxxii. 5. *I said I would confess my Sin, and thou forgavest me.*

5. May I for ever remember, that I my self was once a Rebel and Traytor against the King of Heaven.

And then,

(1.) How just had it been, if God, who is infinite in his Justice and Holiness, being offended and injur'd by my Sin, had sent me to Execution, and given me the just Wages of my Sin, *Rom. vi. 23.*

(2.) How free is the King's Grace to me, both in proclaiming Pardon upon easy Terms, and inclining my proud Heart to accept of it.

(3.) O may I for ever love, honour, and serve this gracious King ; and approve my self a good Subject as long as I live : And never, henceforth, side with his Enemies, Satan, Sin, and Sinners. These had utterly undone and ruined me, and I must for ever have been most miserable, had not *the King of Israel been a merciful King.*

(4.) May I for ever watch against, and abhor Sin, and loath my self, as long as I live, (tho' I have my Pardon) to think, that I was once a Traytor against the best of Kings.

The Unfaithful Officer.

AN Officer going to search the Ale-Houses, sent Word to one of them, that he was coming upon that Duty, being unwilling to take his Friends, and so gave them Time to conceal their Guests.

1. Just so do the Lovers of Sin. It is a rare Thing that ever such an one searches his own Heart; but if he does, he goes without a Light, being unwilling to see his Friends. He does not search his Heart, nor examine his Life, with Design and Desire to reform and amend.

*2. A sincere Soul not only searches his own Heart thoroughly, but desires also, that God himself would search it. *Psal. xxvi. 2. Search me, O GOD, and try my Heart and my Reins. See if there is any evil Way in me, and lead me in the Way everlasting, Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.*

3. It is better to have the Wound searched to the Bottom, tho' it costs some Pain and Trouble, than to have it mortify, and not be discovered till it is too late to save Life.

4. Unwillingness to have the Heart searched, is a certain Sign that the Heart is naught, and is not *upright with GOD.*

Of Prayer.

ONE said, That *such an one pray'd like an Angel.* It was a very unwary Expression; for if a Man can pray no better than an Angel, the meanest Christian can pray better than he.

For,

1. An Angel has no Sin to confess, no Corruptions to bewail, no Pride nor Unbelief to cry for

the Pardon of, and no Temptations to ask Help against. An Angel can praise God better than the best Christian here below, but the humble Christian can pray better than an Angel.

2. If by praying like an Angel, he meant with eloquent Expressions ; that may not be the most acceptable Prayer with God. That Prayer, which is like the Chattering of a Crane or a Swallow, if sincere, and offer'd up in the Name and Strength of Christ, and with a Dependance on his Merits, may be more pleasing to God, than the other's fine Words ; for it is the Heart, and not the Expressions that God looks to. That Prayer, which is but like Groaning, can reach the Ear of a God-hearing Prayer. *My Groanings are not hid from thee*, Psal. xxxviii. 9. *Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner*, was but a short Prayer, but had a gracious Answer.

3. If by praying like an Angel, he means, with warm Affections ; it must be confessed, our Prayers should not be slothful: *The effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*, James v. 16. But as it should be fervent, so it must be the Prayer of a righteous Man ; that is,

(1.) One clothed with the Righteousness of Jesus Christ ; for it is Christ's Merits, and not the Fervency of our Spirit in Prayer, or the Warmth of the Heart, that gives it Acceptance with God.

(2.) It must be the Prayer of one that is righteous and holy in his Conversation. *Psal. lxi. 18. If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not bear me. GOD beareth not Sinners*, John ix. 31. That is, such as love and live in Sin. And tho' I can neither praise like an Angel, nor pray as some Christians, yet may I never be unthankful ; may I mourn as a Dove, under

der a due Sense of Sin, and ever be kept humble, under a Sense of my own Weaknesses and Shortness ; leaving my self, and my poor Performances, at the Feet of Jesus Christ, that he may perfume all with much Incense.

Upon my Sight decaying.

THERE is one Messenger of Death more. *Those that look out at the Windows are darkened.* O may I wisely improve the Admonition, not to trifle away my remaining precious Hours, but remember how near I am to the Close of the Day.

2. I now begin to hold every Thing farther off from me, that I may see it the better. O may I do so by every Thing in, and of this World, and not bring them nearer to me, and grasp them faster, as some do, when they are going out of this World ; though Providence bids them beware of setting their Hearts and *Affections on Things of the Earth.*

3. In that Death has sent his Messenger beforehand to take Possession of the Windows, it assures me, that he designs to come shortly himself, and take Possession of the whole House.

4. Now I am forc'd to betake my self to the Art of Man to help my Sight ; O may I make good Use of the Help that God has provided to strengthen my Sight. O that the Eye of Faith, like a Glass, may more clearly shew me Things to come ; and make them present to me, that otherwise would be far off, and appear but very dim.

5. When my Eyes were at the best, I saw but darkly, as through a Glass ; but when my bodily Eyes are closed, I shall see better, *Eye to Eye,*

and Face to Face: I shall see *Jesus Christ* as he is, 1 John iii. 2.

As my bodily Sight decays, O may my spiritual Sight be clearer. May my Faith and Comforts grow as the Morning Light, increasing unto a perfect Day. And then, Lord, let the Day of my Life close when it will, only grant, that at *Evening-Time* it may be light, Zech. xiv. 7. If thou wilt be with me in the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, I shall fear no Evil, Psal. xxiii. 4.

Thoughts upon seeing a Worm.

1. **W**HAT a poor despicable Creature is here! We tread them under our Feet at our Pleasure; a base and very contemptible Creature. Is this Creature chosen out to resemble Man! *Job xxv. 6. The Son of Man, which is a Worm.*

2. Do any boast of their Relations, their Stock, and Kindred? Proud Man! Behold thy Relations, thy Kindred, according to the Flesh. *Job xvii. 14. I said to Corruption, thou art my Father, and to the Worm, thou art my Mother, and my Sister.*

3. Should I be proud of, or please my self so much about gay Clothes and Fashions? What do they cover? nothing but a poor despicable Worm. And when I am pleased with beholding my Face, then I should think, in a little Time, this will be eaten by Worms. *Job xix. 26. Worms will destroy this Body.* Chap. xxiv. 20. *The Worm shall feed sweetly on him.*

4. Here's an Emblem of the Person that lives wholly on this Earth, grovelling in the Dust, never looking up towards Heaven: A poor blind Creature, that neither sees or seeks after higher Things, than may be extracted out of the Earth. What a

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poor base Life do such live! Take him out of the Earth, and he is like one out of his Element. Here are his Thoughts, here is his Heart, here his Hope is, and his chief Delight: This is the Subject of his Discourse, *John iii. 31.*

5. It may put us in mind of *the Worm that shall never die*; awakened Conscience in *another World*, *Isa. lxvi. 24.* *Mark ix. 44.* *Where their Worm shall never die, and the Fire shall not be quenched.*

O may I live a more noble Life, agreeable to my higher Nature, as a reasonable Creature. I have a precious Soul to be cared for. Man shall not die as a Worm, why then should he live as a Worm, an earthly Life? May my *Affections be set on Things above, not on Things on the Earth*, *Col. iii. 2.*

Thus I have endeavour'd to perform what I promis'd; that is, to offer you some Help against vain Thoughts; which I am sure is a great Trouble to every sincere Christian, and against which they will be very desirous of Help. I also propos'd to give you a Pattern, *how to spiritualize whatever is before you*; the better to prepare the People of God, to speak more to the Profit of each other, and those that are about them. I had prepared the Heads of several other Arguments of this Nature; but the Book swelling faster than was design'd, I chose here to put a Period to it. And I earnestly pray, that the God of Grace will spiritualize the Minds of those that read, that they may not only be Gainers by these Things, but be able to follow the same Method to improve every Occurrence of Providence to their own and others Profit: That *out of the good Treasure of the Heart*, the Mouth may speak what may be most profitable.

profitable to the Hearer, and most for the Honour of the Gospel; that Religion may gain Ground, the Life and Power of Godliness revive, and that private Conversation may be more suited to promote the Conviction of Sinners, and the Growth and Establishment of weak Christians; and so the general Issue of all be our own Peace and Comfort another Day. Remember that God's Eye is upon us, and his Ear is open to hear the Language of our Lips. *The Lord hearkens and hears, and a Book of Remembrance is written before him, for them that fear the Lord, and think upon his Name.*



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